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ABSTRACT

This packet contains resources and guidelines for developing General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) for further education programs in Britain. The materials are designed to be used flexibly to determine strategies or define priorities, aid problem solving in developing systems for GNVQs, audit and review existing systems, and provide training and development activities. The materials focus on the management of learning. They present issues and strategies for the provision, organization, and evaluation of GNVQs, addressing key issues such as guidance, assessment, staffing support, and tutorial systems. The packet is organized in sections containing the following different types of materials: (1) context--introduces and defines GNVQs, provides background information, and gives an overview of the development process; (2) frameworks--provides the development materials organized into five broad topic sections (curriculum, learning, support, assessment, and achievement); and (3) resources, including a glossary of terms and a list containing 67 references and citations for further reading. (KC)

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Managing GNVQ development

The Staff College and Learning Partners

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Frameworks for managing learning series

Managing GNVQ development

The Staff College and
Learning Partners

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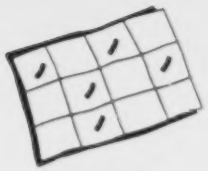

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Key issues

This is a list of the five Frameworks subjects in this development pack, and the key issue topics discussed within each Framework. The key issue topics listed here are fully cross-referenced throughout the text. They always appear in italics, and are marked by a ☛ symbol in the margin.

CURRICULUM
- Curricular strategies
- Modular approaches
- Integral approaches
- Flexible structures

LEARNING
- Induction
- Teaching and learning
- Core skills

SUPPORT
- Initial guidance
- Tutorial systems
- Learning support
- Exit guidance

ASSESSMENT
- Initial review
- On-course assessment
- Credit accumulation

ACHIEVEMENT
- Managing programmes
- Staff support
- Quality review

Introduction

A new approach to materials

This pack offers a practical toolkit:

- It is based upon a process for developing GNVQs (General National Vocational Qualifications) which may lead to a number of different solutions rather than any particular one.
- It is in loose leaf format, enabling materials to be copied and used.
- It contains materials and resources which may be used for development, review or training.
- It contains an index of key issues, a glossary of terms, and references for further reading.

Who are the materials for?

The materials are intended for use by anyone concerned with the development of GNVQs, including:

- **GNVQ programme managers** – those responsible for the development, management or co-ordination of GNVQ provision.
- **Course leaders** – all those responsible for providing programme leadership, co-ordinating personal tutorial systems, developing core skills teaching, or co-ordinating assessment and verification.
- **Teaching staff** working on a GNVQ programme.
- **Curriculum managers** with overall responsibility for curriculum and teaching in institutions.
- **Staff trainers and developers** – to use in training or to support curriculum-led development.

The materials are intended for a wide and varied audience, who may have different levels of information about the post-16 education system. The materials can be used selectively. The modular structure allows you to select those materials relevant to you – whether you are preparing papers, undertaking development work, working with development teams, or providing training.

What are the aims?

The materials are designed to be used flexibly to:

- determine strategies or define priorities;
- aid problem-solving in developing systems for GNVQs;
- audit and review existing systems;
- provide training and development activities.

What do the materials cover?

The materials focus on the management of learning. They present issues and strategies for the provision, organisation and evaluation of GNVQs. They address key issues such as guidance, assessment, staffing support and tutorial systems, but are not intended to give a detailed presentation of teaching and learning methods.

The development pack is organised in sections, containing different types of materials:

- **Context** – introduces and defines GNVQs, provides background information and gives an overview of the development process.
- **Frameworks** – provides the development materials organised into five broad topic sections. The use of these materials is described in more detail below.
- **Resources** – contains a glossary of terms, references and further reading.

How to use the materials

The materials can be used to support any level of development work – strategic, problem-solving or detailed development. For an explanation of this classification please read the section on 'Managing development' (in **Context** – p36).

The core of the materials is divided into five modular **Frameworks**, each on a major theme such as 'Learning delivery'. Each **Framework** deals with particular key issues, such as *induction*.

The context section

Materials in the introductory **Context** section are designed to provide information and to stimulate debate about the broader educational issues that influence GNVQ.

The Frameworks

The five **Frameworks** sections present materials in a sequence starting from strategic organisation. The materials are designed to be worked in any order, according to the purpose for which they are being used.

- If you are concerned with strategic development you may wish to start with *curricular strategy* (in the **Frameworks** section on **Curriculum**) and move on to the strategic options for provision and delivery, discussed in *modular approaches* and *integrated approaches* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**).
- If you are reviewing current provision or problem-solving you may wish to locate your area(s) of current concern and start with those.
- If you are undertaking detailed development work you may wish to use appropriate sections such as *teaching and learning* (in **Frameworks – Learning**) as stimulus material.
- Materials for staff development can be drawn from the pack as necessary and used in conjunction with other material – e.g. from the **Context** section.

The materials are not intended to be prescriptive. They ask you to define issues and make decisions and choices, based upon the resources and systems that you may have already established. The materials are designed as a resource to be used in a variety of ways, so each is written to allow flexibility of usage.

In each of the **Frameworks** sections there is a discussion of the key issues. Included are materials designed to assist problem-solving and decision-making:

- **Checklists** – summarise or present issues for development and review.
- **Options lists** – present strategic choices with some of the pros and cons of each option.

The materials facilitate your own decision-making and appropriate activity sheets are included for each of the **Frameworks** sections to help you do this. The types of activity sheets are:

- **Audit sheets** – to enable you to take stock of your current practices, resources and opportunities.
- **Strategy sheets** – to enable you to evaluate available solutions or strategies.
- **Action planning sheets** – to enable you to determine actions and priorities.

A contents table at the beginning of each **Framework** indicates which types of activity sheet are included, and for which key issue topic.

The materials are designed to be used as well as read:

- Generous margins allow you to add notes, comments and supplementary material.

- In a number of places, space is left for you to add your own items or issues – e.g. in checklists.
- Activity sheets give you space to write your responses and add your own issues.
- Materials may be photocopied and used without limitation within your institution. You may find it helpful to photocopy a working copy, leaving the original pack as a backup.

Although the materials can be used by someone working alone, they are particularly suitable as stimulus materials for groups, e.g. a development team, or as part of staff training activity. You can add to or adapt the materials to suit your own circumstances.

Keywords for cross-referencing

To assist your movement through the materials, the text is cross-referenced by a system of *keywords*. The symbol ☞ in the margin denotes the use of keywords, which are always in *italic letters*. These keywords correspond to the key issue topics discussed in the **Frameworks**.

The keywords are also used:

- At the end of the **Contents**, where a full list of keywords is given, providing an index list of key issues.
- In the **Development matrix** which introduces the **Frameworks** sections (see pp42-43). Each of the keywords is located on the matrix. As these keywords correspond to the key issues discussed in the five **Frameworks**, the matrix provides a useful location tool.

Licence conditions for using the materials

The Staff College and Learning Partners grant the purchasing institution a non-transferable licence to use these materials as follows:

- The printed materials may be photocopied and used as many times as required in the purchasing institution solely.
- Short excerpts from the materials may be incorporated into a handbook, development paper or review document if the source is acknowledged and the document is not offered for sale.
- Permission for other uses should be sought from The Staff College.

Training and support

The use of these materials is supported by:

- Training, which is offered in a number of ways:
  - the launch of this pack will be supported by a developers' course run by The Staff College.
  - in-house training can be arranged by Learning Partners at your institution. This is the most cost-effective method of arranging training for a team, and can be customised for your purposes.
- Consultancy, which is available for all stages of development and the implementation of systems.

To arrange training or consultancy, contact:

Lynton Gray at The Staff College, tel: 01761 462503
John Hurley at Learning Partners, tel: 01242 620437

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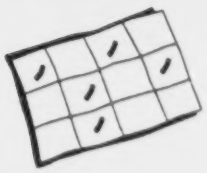

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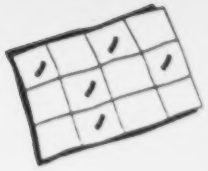

Context: GNVQs

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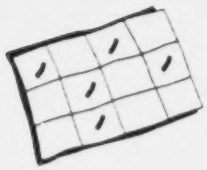


Context: GNVQs

1. What are GNVQs?

The review of vocational qualifications that took place in the mid-1980s came about because there was a growing realisation that the post-16 vocational curriculum was a 'qualifications jungle', with a confusing plethora of awards, awarding bodies and levels. It recommended:

- the establishment of a new, independent body – the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ);
- that all vocational qualifications come under a new framework of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs);
- that these qualifications should have criterion-referenced assessment, accrediting the achievement of skills in the workplace;
- the qualifications should be modular, hence giving flexibility and allowing for credit accumulation.

Thus NCVQ is a standard-setting body rather than a validating or awarding body; the latter role remains with the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI).

The White Paper, **Education and training for the 21st century** (Department of Education and Science *et al.* 1991), recognised that there was also a need for a vocational qualification which delivered underpinning knowledge to support the skills training assessed by NVQs. This new qualification would share many of the characteristics of NVQs, and in particular the nature of the assessment and the modular structure. It would be delivered in schools and colleges of further education (FE) rather than in the workplace. Its introduction should begin to address the issues of the academic/vocational divide, the low post-16 participation rate, and the need for a better educated (as well as trained) workforce. It should offer a broad preparation for employment, provide progression to higher education (HE) and be of equal standing to academic qualifications at the same level.

This new award was given the initial title of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). Alternative names, including vocational A levels, have been proffered but GNVQs is now the most widely understood designation.

The important characteristics of GNVQs are as follows:

- It is a vocationally related qualification.
- It is knowledge-based, defined by knowledge specifications.
- It has core skills integrated into the vocational context.
- Outcomes are defined by units of assessment.
- The assessment is graded; merit and distinction are available on the basis of separate grading criteria.
- The assessment includes written end tests, externally set and marked.

GNVQs are now replacing well-established qualifications such as BTEC First and National Diplomas, and City and Guilds craft courses. There were 80,000 GNVQ learners registered in 1993/94, the second year of its life. Occupational areas already covered include:

- art and design;
- business;
- construction and the built environment;
- health and social care;
- hospitality and catering;
- leisure and tourism;
- manufacturing;
- science.

From 1994/95 the following areas are being progressively introduced:

- distribution;
- engineering;
- information technology;
- management studies;
- media – communication and production.

From 1996/97 the following areas will be piloted:

- land-based industries;
- performing arts.

The structural characteristics of GNVQs

GNVQs at all levels are constructed of units, each of which carries its own accreditation and, together with other units, forms the complete award. Each award also includes core skills units and is graded according to three or four grading themes. **Figure 1** summarises this.

How are the assessment units structured?

Each unit is subdivided into:

- a number of elements, which define the themes of the unit;
- a number of performance criteria (PCs), which are statements of attainment. The candidate has to provide evidence of achievement of all the PCs in all the units to gain the award;
- a number of range statements, which specify the depth of coverage; evidence of coverage of all the range statements in each element must be provided to gain the award.

Figure 2 shows an example of a core skills unit.

How are students assessed?

In each case, the pass level award is gained from mandatory, optional and core skills units. Evidence of achievement of the grading criteria (assessable statements attached to the grading themes) is necessary to gain a merit or

Figure 1: Summary of GNVQ structure

GNVQ name	Mandatory units	Optional units	Additional units	Core skills units	Grading themes
Foundation	3, all from the same voc. area	3, from any voc. area	None specified	Number Communication IT	Info. seeking*, planning, evaluation, quality
Intermediate	4, all from the same voc. area	2, from the same voc. area as the mandatory units	None specified	Number Communication IT	Info. seeking, planning, evaluation, quality
Advanced	8, all from the same voc. area	4, from the same voc. area as the mandatory units	Up to 6, can be non-GNVQ units or from any GNVQ voc. area	Number Communication IT	Info. seeking, planning, evaluation, quality

* Information seeking and handling

Figure 2: Example of a core skills unit

Structure	Content	Purpose
Unit title	Core skills communication level 2	Summarises the area of achievement covered and the level
Elements of achievement	e.g. Element 2.2: Prepare written material on routine matters	Specify the detailed skills, knowledge and understanding which underpin performance
Performance criteria	1. all necessary information is included and is accurate 2. documents are legible 3. grammar and punctuation follow standard conventions and words used routinely are spelled correctly 4. the format used is appropriate to the nature of the material and the audience	Define successful performance for each element
Range statements	*Subject matters:* routine letters and administration *Conventions:* use of standard punctuation *Format:* pre-set formats (memos), outline formats (letters, reports) *Audience:* people familiar with the subject matter	Define the major dimensions of the element

Source: BTEC (1993a) **Implementing BTEC GNVQs – a guide for centres.**

distinction grade at any GNVQ level. Core skills must be achieved to at least the same level as the award.

Evidence of achievement is in the form of coursework assignments, which have to cover all the PCs, range statements and grading criteria, and which form the bulk of the portfolio. Core skills and additional units are not graded. Evidence for core skills must be in the vocational context – i.e. vocational assignments have to include core skills PCs. The best one-third of the final portfolio of evidence is matched against the grading criteria to determine the portfolio grade.

In addition, mandatory units are tested by externally set and marked written tests. These are not graded, nor do they form part of the portfolio (though the results can be included there) but until the test for each unit is passed, the unit cannot be accredited. The pass mark is 70 per cent and candidates can re-sit the tests.

What features make GNVQs unique?

This is difficult to answer simply. Other vocational qualifications, e.g. BTECs, have core skills, are modular, have criterion-referenced assessment, are set to national standards, have clear progression routes through specified levels and are based in specified occupational areas.

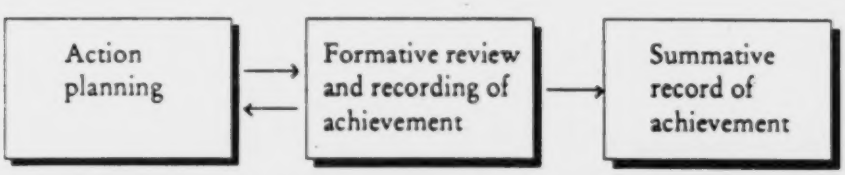
Perhaps the one characteristic that distinguishes GNVQs from all other qualifications, however, is that **the responsibility for collecting evidence of achievement lies with the learner**. The implications of this are profound. The learner really does have – and feels as though s/he has – ownership (a much-trivialised word in this context) of the learning process. The sense of achievement is high and very motivating. The quality of portfolios of evidence is often exemplary. The learners are very well prepared to fend for themselves in future education and/or training, either in employment or in higher education. In fact, they may well be better prepared for HE than those with A levels as entry qualifications because of the transferable core skills.

One other important difference is that GNVQs are not time-determined. Although most current GNVQs are offered full-time as one or two year courses, part-time routes or more flexible arrangements for timing are equally possible.

How is the delivery of GNVQs managed?

The increased responsibility placed on the learner affects the strategies of managing, delivering and supporting GNVQs in schools and colleges. The **Frameworks** sections of this pack are designed to help you address these issues. Outlined here are some of the main changes that result from the design of GNVQs:

- The development of common **induction** programmes, where all GNVQ learners go for diagnosis before allocation to their appropriate level. These are likely to include elements of:
  - initial guidance;
  - diagnostic assessment;
  - sampling or tasting of options;
  - experience of the assessment process.
- **Tutorial support and guidance**: the role of the personal tutor has changed to become the manager of learning. Learners on GNVQ programmes require full and careful guidance on entry, during the programme and on exit. The tutorial process becomes:



Note: The tutorial processes of guidance and action planning will form the focus of the next publication in the *'Frameworks for managing learning'* series – **Tutoring for achievement.**

- **Action planning** is a crucial process. Here the learner negotiates his/her learning programme with the tutor. Careers guidance is involved to ensure the programme will fulfil the learner's career aspirations. Diagnostic testing is carried out to identify specific learning support needs, and accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL) takes place. This is also the opportunity to begin team-building and to make the learner familiar with all aspects of the learning programme (particularly the assessment). Further education colleges are running GNVQ induction programmes of three weeks or longer.

- **Formative review and recording** builds on existing profiling practice. The key features are negotiated target-setting and action plan review. This process also provides opportunities for tracking and recording achievement. This requires one-to-one tutorials at regular intervals, and hence puts considerable pressure on time. It is essential to use flexible teaching and learning strategies to make more time free for individual tutorials.

- **Summative recording of achievement** involves production of the national record of achievement (ROA) and completion of the portfolio of evidence. This stage is important as it links the current learning programme to future learning or employment and emphasises the 'lifetime learning' concept.

Other significant changes include:

- **Introduction of study support systems:** the development and significance of *learning support* systems is discussed in **Frameworks – Support.**

- **Improved curriculum management:** GNVQs have brought about some significant changes in the way schools and colleges manage their curriculum. Most have appointed a GNVQ co-ordinator – a senior or middle management post with a whole school/college role. This has led to a more efficient and co-ordinated curriculum planning and development process. Some colleges are looking at changing the traditional course team system, based in departments, to programme teams with teachers from different vocational areas working together.

- **Change in the learning culture:** GNVQs have been one of a number of initiatives which have prompted the development of a more learner-centred culture, particularly in colleges.

How do GNVQs compare with other qualifications?

It is difficult to make precise comparisons between GNVQs and other qualifications, so the equivalences shown in **Figure 3** should be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

The question of how demanding GNVQs are in relation to other qualifications is also difficult to answer, not least because the first cohort of GNVQ Advanced learners only qualified at the end of 1993/94.

Figure 3: GNVQs and equivalences

G/NVQ level	GNVQ name	Academic equivalent	Previous qualifications
1	Foundation		DoVE* Foundation
2	Intermediate	GCSE	BTEC First Diploma
3	Advanced	A level	BTEC National Diploma
4		Degree	BTEC Higher Diploma

*Diploma of Vocational Education

How are GNVQs working in practice?

The implementation of GNVQs has already been a story of great achievement. However, reviews carried out by the inspectorate of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and for the Employment Department have identified some practical difficulties and some problems of policy. These are addressed in the next **Context** section under 'Current concerns for GNVQs' (p30) and throughout the **Frameworks** sections. It is appropriate to report here some of the main practical difficulties identified in these reports (FEFC Inspectorate 1994; OFSTED 1994; Wolf *et al.* 1994).

- **Curriculum management for GNVQs is often inadequate.** Problems in planning, programme design, the integration of all the GNVQ requirements and cross-institutional co-ordination of provision are apparent.
- **Standards are inadequately specified.** The language of the specifications is often complex, but can fail to specify standards clearly.

- **Assessment practice is variable.** Centres may interpret the standards differently, and inconsistencies in grading have been evident. Weaknesses in verification have also been identified.
- **There are problems in the assessment of the body of knowledge.** The need to achieve all of the unit and core skill elements, range statements and grading criteria imposes stringent requirements on assignments and a heavy burden on learners. Coverage of the body of knowledge is duplicated in the external tests. Also, coverage of the range can sometimes be at the expense of the standard of achievement.
- **Student recording is proving excessive.** Marking assignments, tracking achievement and other GNVQ administration is proving to be immensely time-consuming. This can detract from teaching and learning.

Inadequacies in management, assessment and achievement are more pronounced at intermediate level than at advanced. Responsibility for these problems is not only attributed to colleges and schools, but also to NCVQ and the vocational awarding bodies (BTEC, CGLI, and RSA). However, not all the comments on GNVQs are adverse. In both schools and colleges, students taking GNVQs value the overall approach and most prefer the GNVQ learning process and assessment regime to that for A level. They also see the advantages in the flexibility of the programme and the links with employers.

2. Curriculum policy issues for GNVQs

This **Context** section provides background information and discussion of policy issues. Whilst these may be familiar to some readers, for others the materials will constitute a useful summary. They are designed to be read either in sequence or as selected topics and they are cross- referenced to the development materials in the **Frameworks** sections by ☞ Keywords where appropriate.

Policy directions

Colleges and school sixth forms are subject to a number of policy initiatives to enhance participation in post-compulsory education and improve quality of provision. These policies are concerned with:

- **widening access** to post-16 education;
- **improving outcomes** by increasing student retention and examination pass rates, leading to more successful student completions;
- **maintaining standards** through greater emphasis on examinations and testing, and upon institutional quality control systems;
- **redefining the curriculum** via initiatives to change its structure and balance, and to establish new progression routes.

These policies are being implemented in a climate of reducing unit costs through increased efficiency. Next follows an examination of each of these contemporary policy directions and the implications for GNVQs.

GNVQs are a part of a developing national curriculum steer, and the inclusion of this qualification in the Dearing review of the 14–19 curriculum underlines its importance in national strategy. Furthermore, GNVQs have attracted some criticism – notably from Professor Alan Smithers – for failings he perceives in the national strategy. Some current concerns for GNVQs are discussed at the end of this **Context** section (see p30).

Widening access

The Government has adopted a set of national targets for education and training (NTETs) based upon those suggested by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) (see **Figure 4**). To achieve them, a National Training Task Force has been established to work with Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland. The targets imply a substantial extension of attainment over current levels, which are low compared to other European countries.

Figure 4: National targets for education and training

Foundation learning

1. By 1997, 80% of young people to reach NVQ II (or equivalent).
2. Training and education to NVQ III (or equivalent) available to all young people who can benefit.
3. By 2000, 50% of young people to reach NVQ III (or equivalent).
4. Education and training provision to develop self-reliance, flexibility and breadth.

Lifetime learning

1. By 1996, all employees should take part in training or development activities.
2. By 1996, 50% of the workforce aiming for NVQs or units towards them.
3. By 2000, 50% of the workforce qualified to at least NVQ III (or equivalent).
4. By 1996, 50% of medium to larger organisations to be 'Investors in People'.

Equivalences: NVQ II is equivalent to four GCSEs at grades A-C; NVQ III is equivalent to two A levels
Source: National Training Task Force (1992) **National targets for education and training**

Widening access means a number of different things:

- More opportunity for students in any age range who are in the second, third and fourth quartile of previous attainment.
- More opportunity for adult students.
- More opportunity for students who have been disadvantaged in the education system, as some women and many black people have been.
- More opportunity to study in part-time modes, or through open or distance learning.

The FE sector is already expanding provision to meet these targets. Schools are also being encouraged to contribute to the achievement of the targets, not only through academic courses, but also through the provision of general vocational education. In some areas where participation rates are high, this has led to saturation of the 16–19 market, whilst in less favoured areas there remains a substantial need for improved opportunity in vocational education. The extension of opportunity is focused on the

second and third quartile of educational attainment. GNVQs provide a more appropriate route than GCSEs and A levels for many young people in this band, and potentially a more suitable route for many adults.

☞ See **Frameworks – Curriculum.**

Improving outcomes

The essence of Government policy has been to encourage educational institutions to improve outcomes by focusing greater attention on them. A number of steps have been taken to promote wider availability of information about outcomes, including the publication of results tables for GCSE and A level examinations in schools and colleges. It is likely that more information about institutional performance in GNVQs will be published in due course.

There are significant differences in students' chances of achieving successful outcomes, even between similar institutions in similar areas. The 1993 report **Unfinished business** by the Audit Commission and OFSTED revealed wide fluctuations in non-completion rates and pass rates between institutions, and between A level and BTEC provision in FE. Attention to outcomes is both proper and overdue.

Whilst the Government's initiatives have achieved their intended objectives of raising public awareness about comparative examination performance and increasing some types of information about educational outcomes, the publication of tables has also been subject to well-reasoned criticism on the following grounds:

- Tables can be manipulated by institutions which are selective of students and restrictive of their examination entries.
- Schools figures (unlike FE data) do not give reliable measures of retention, and therefore of successful student completion.
- Tables take no account of the value added by good providers in poor areas compared with average institutions in favoured areas.
- They may focus attention on examination performance rather than on learning.
- They do not directly address the circumstances necessary to improve the quality of learning.

These criticisms do little to damage the proposition that information about the comparative performance of educational institutions will concentrate attention on improved outcomes. They do, however, identify weaknesses in the presentation and interpretation of information, and in the responses of some institutions.

To some extent these issues are being addressed in the further education sector. Information on GNVQ outcomes is collected from colleges by the FEFC. The funding model adopted by the FEFC rewards the recruitment and retention of students, and the achievement of successful

results. Good outcomes are rewarded, whilst colleges are still encouraged to broaden access to meet expansion targets. The most important consequence of this is the increased guidance and support being given to learners, in order to meet the targets.

☞ See **Frameworks – Support.**

Maintaining standards

There has been a perception in parts of the British media and amongst some politicians that every improvement in educational attainment is purchased at the expense of lowering standards – that more must inevitably mean worse. Thus, if institutions do succeed both in broadening their intake and improving their outcomes, then this will be interpreted as a fall in standards. This is not a view held by more successful European countries who have already achieved levels of participation and attainment that still remain distant targets for Britain.

In response to the concern about standards the Government has:

- introduced the regular testing of attainment as a part of the national curriculum;
- commissioned the Her Majesty's Inspectorate review of the standards and consistency of GCSE examinations (HMI 1993);
- introduced a more formal, externally set examination element into GNVQs, unlike former BTEC arrangements.

The collection of standardised and comparative data on attainment is long overdue. Used intelligently – not as part of a crude league table – such data could provide an important tool for identifying educational need, and directing policy and resources towards it.

Students themselves have no interest in qualifications that lose currency because they are devalued; the student is merely short-changed. Standards of education are important. It is, however, vital that the standards which are assessed are relevant and appropriate, otherwise we are raising not standards but hurdles.

One focus of concern has been the standard of literacy, particularly in spelling. In responding to concerns about literacy the Government has:

- stressed the need to ensure the development of basic skills in young people and adults;
- introduced more stringent treatment of grammar and spelling into the marking of public examinations.

It is far from clear that ability in spelling is the most appropriate indicator of standards in education. Some people of high ability – including Winston Churchill the wartime leader – have demonstrated lifelong difficulty in spelling.

Grammar is more relevant. There is no clear link between the particular structures of grammar, which vary between languages, and general cognitive ability. However, grammatical structures in any language are there to clarify meaning. The ability to use language clearly is certainly linked to the ability to think clearly and to organise writing; students who develop this ability are likely to perform better in all parts of their programme. There are, therefore, links between language skills and study skills which suggest that improved language ability can improve learning.

The increased stress on spelling and grammar will be disabling for some students, particularly those whose previous school experience did not include the current stress on 'correct English'. There are implications for integral core skills teaching in GNVQ which will mean that all tutors will need to take some responsibility for developing their students' literacy skills. Individual students who experience difficulty with the use of language will require careful diagnostic assessment to establish needs and possible additional support.

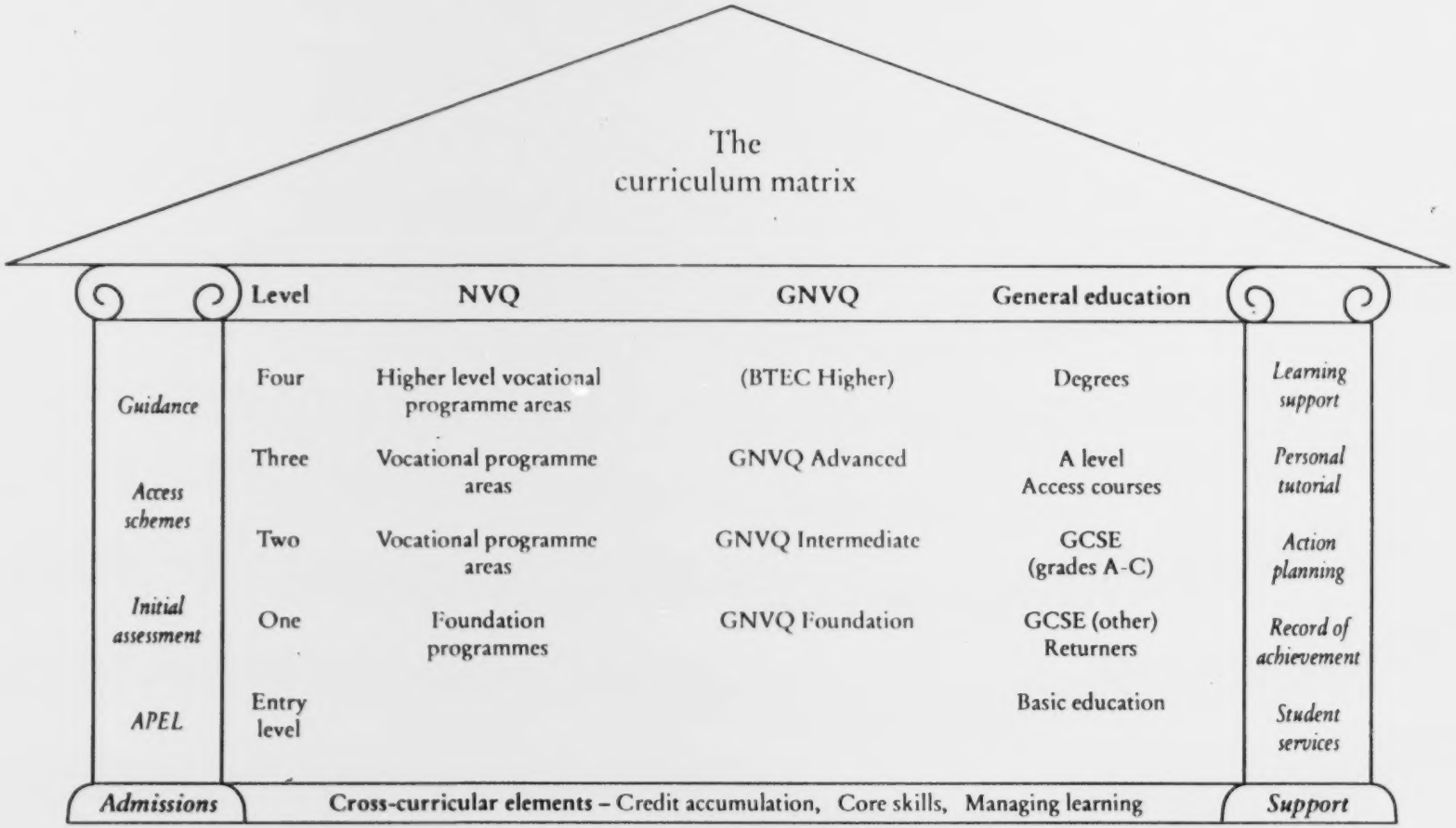
The concern with standards is also reflected in GNVQs by the introduction of external tests at a late stage in the development of the programme. The tests were intended to standardise outcomes and add rigour. The extent to which this has been achieved is discussed below (see p33 – 'External tests').

Whilst most public attention has been directed towards the testing of spelling and grammar and the maintenance of rigour in public examinations, institutions have been encouraged to take measures to ensure the quality of their standards of provision and their outcomes. This is reflected in the introduction of quality control systems in colleges, and more frequent inspection of schools (under the auspices of OFSTED) and colleges (by the FEFC). A positive outcome of these developments has been a greater awareness of the quality of what is delivered to the student, and the way that curriculum support systems enhance the quality of a student's experience. These issues, which are arguably more important to the long-term standard of GNVQs, are explored in **Frameworks – Support** and *quality review* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Redefining the curriculum

There is an evolving reorganisation of the post-16 curriculum, of which GNVQs are a central part. This reorganisation is now becoming known as the 'three track' model, although an agreement between NCVQ and the National Open College Network offers a fourth, NCVQ-approved route to adult students through Open College Networks (OCNs) (**NVQ units and open college networks – statement of intention.** RSA 1994). A map of an evolving curriculum matrix is given in **Figure 5**. The curriculum is structured into three broad streams and by NVQ levels.

Figure 5: A map of the curriculum structure



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The initiatives that make up the evolving curriculum have not been wholly consistent but, taken together, these developments:

- place a greater emphasis on **assessment** – initial, continuous, and final;
- substantially **simplify** the structure of qualifications;
- remove many barriers to **access** implicit in the old qualification system;
- clarify **progression** routes;
- promote **flexibility** in curriculum structure.

The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative Extension (TVEI) has provided a precursor to many aspects of the new structure, including GNVQs. Institutions have used TVEI to review and reform their personal tutorial arrangements, and to introduce action planning, records of achievement and strategies for curriculum enhancement.

The aims of TVEI include:

- developing the relationship of learning in schools and colleges with the world of work;
- improving skills and qualifications, particularly in those areas seen as critical to Britain's future industrial well-being;
- providing work experience;
- enabling young people to be effective through active and practical learning methods;
- providing counselling, guidance, individual action planning and ROAs to enable progression to higher levels of education and training.

TVEI has been influential in promoting the concept of core skills – communication, numeracy, problem-solving, information technology (IT) and study skills.

There are some notable characteristics of the developing curriculum structure:

- It is inherently more flexible, lends itself to modularisation and credit accumulation systems, and markedly improves progression for vocational education. At the moment there is no agreed framework for credit accumulation, although the FEU model (FEU 1992) constitutes a starting point for discussion.

☞ See **Frameworks – Assessment.**

- The curriculum is supported by services which facilitate access, and by those which support learners. Learner support – particularly guidance, tutorial and learning support – is necessary to make the structure work efficiently. These issues are developed next – see 'Learner support services' (p26).

- The curriculum structure is increasingly assessment and outcome-led. This is reflected in the controversial issue of external testing for GNVQs and the confusion that has been evident in some institutions between assessment frameworks and curriculum structures. There are also related issues of teaching, learning and quality. These are developed below under 'Current concerns for GNVQs' (p30).

Learner support services

One of the ways in which institutions have responded to the changing directions of educational policy – and, in FE, to meet the requirements of the FEFC – has been to develop a system of learner support services. Similar developments are apparent in many larger schools. The importance of the cross-curricular and support elements is apparent from the FEU survey of current practice in colleges – **Learner support services in further education**. The report concludes:

> In general, colleges recognise the potential of learner support services for enhancing the overall quality of the college offer although developing a full range of service standards is still some way off. Much could be gained by creating effective links between the work of support services and the college mission statement. (FEU 1993b)

The report provides a useful taxonomy of learner support services and resources. This can be developed into a diagrammatic portrayal of the cluster of learner services (see **Figure 6**). Each of the elements making up the cluster provides a significant contribution to the student experience of GNVQs.

Admissions and guidance

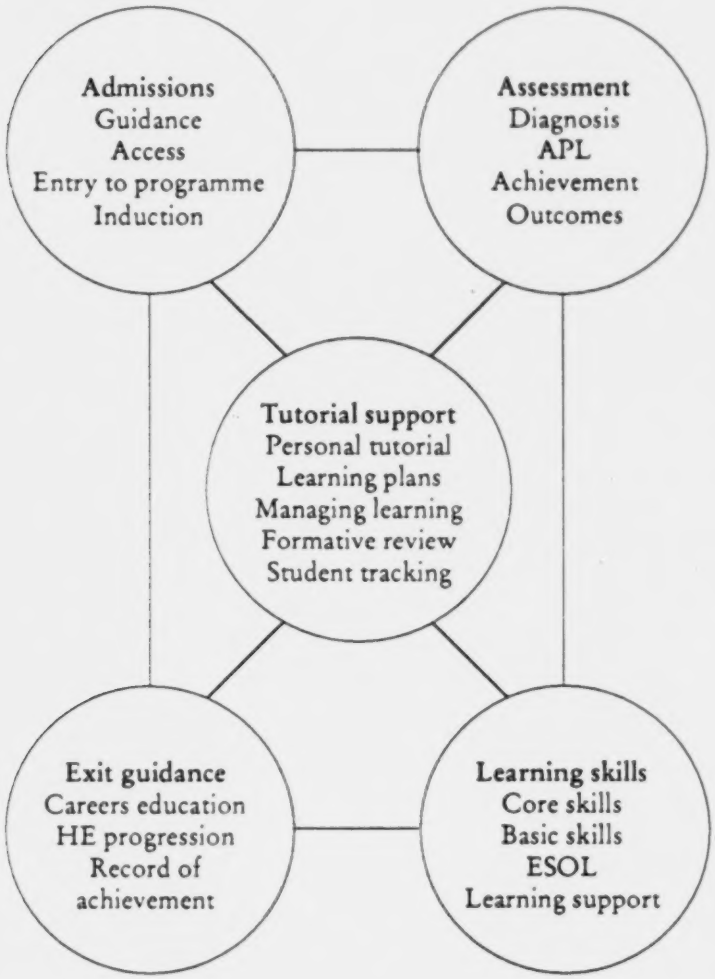
Modern admissions systems are concerned not only with enrolling students, but also with:

- providing guidance on the availability of educational opportunity and the appropriateness of particular courses or modes of study;
- facilitating access, particularly for students who are not school leavers;
- inducting students into the institution.

These services may be provided in one institution-wide system, but more frequently they are provided by several sections.

Guidance can be both a specific service, related only to student admissions, and a process of establishing need and action planning, which is fundamental to GNVQs. Guidance is closely related to initial and diagnostic assessment, is a day-to-day responsibility of personal tutors, and supports progression. Good liaison is therefore desirable between all

Figure 6: Cluster diagram of the inter-linkages of learner services for GNVQs



APL – Accreditation of prior learning
ESOL – English for speakers of other languages

parties in the guidance process, and in-college networks can facilitate co-ordination. See *initial guidance* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Assessment

Current policy is moving the emphasis of education from provision to the assessment of attainment. Almost every member of the teaching staff and academic members of student support staff are concerned in some way with assessment. Assessment activities which are often a part of the student support process include:

- initial diagnostic assessment;
- accrediting prior learning;
- formative review and action planning;
- summative review and record of achievement.

There needs to be good liaison between personal tutors, staff teaching programmes and learner support staff in order to record and accredit all areas of students' learning.

☞ See **Frameworks – Assessment.**

Tutorial support

Most institutions have systems of tutorial support for full-time students and some have also extended these to part-time students. The range of responsibility of personal or course tutors varies considerably, but in most institutions students are allocated a tutor who has a clear responsibility for the oversight of their academic development, whatever other pastoral responsibilities are also allocated to that tutor.

In GNVQs, tutorial systems are a fundamental requirement in order to assist all students in the management of their learning, and for student tracking. Teaching staff, in their tutorial role, will liaise frequently with learner support services.

☞ See *tutorial systems* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Learning support

Learning support is concerned with the development of the learning skills of a wide range of learners, at all levels of achievement, to enable them to study more effectively. It is concerned with key learning skills – the communication, study and numerical skills for effective learning – and with learning gaps between the demands of a programme and a student's skill.

Key skills and GNVQ core skills are not the same. Core skills are a broader set of transferable, work-related skills. GNVQ grading criteria define some key learning skills not directly specified as core skills. In GNVQs, nonetheless, integral and additional core skills provision will give appropriate learning skills development for many students.

There remain a number of students for whom additional support is appropriate. This may range from the rapid solution of a particular difficulty (e.g. planning a report) at a drop-in session in a workshop or resource centre, through to longer term support, for instance by ESOL provision or an additional support tutor for a person with severe limitations on their physical abilities.

☞ See *learning support* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Guidance for progression

Exit guidance cannot just occur at the end of a programme. In GNVQs there will be a need for continuing guidance about progression. This will include:

- careers education and guidance;
- assistance for HE progression;
- guidance on work placement and job finding.

As well as personal tutorial staff, exit guidance involves a variety of specialists, particularly in careers guidance. Provision is likely to be made through integral teaching on the programme or through tutorial support, as well as by additional provision at appropriate times.

The FEFC is now proposing that the guidance received by GNVQ students should be recorded at entry, on programme and at exit and, alongside the ROA, is likely to be a key document maintained by personal tutors.

☞ See *exit guidance* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Staff and curriculum development systems

There are implications for learner services from all contemporary curriculum change. The evolution of student support sets an agenda of staff development for the whole institution if institutional policy aims to:

- raise staff awareness of learning issues;
- develop the skills of tutorial and other teaching staff;
- influence the curriculum in matters such as core skills development and delivery.

Staff involved in learner support roles have specialist training and curriculum development roles, which it is important for an institution to recognise and mobilise in GNVQ development.

Network activity, whether formalised or informal, is an intrinsic part of achieving a corporate rather than a fragmented approach to learner support provision. Colleges will need to ensure good networking amongst those involved in these various staff and curriculum development systems.

☞ See *quality review* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Current concerns for GNVQs

The curriculum structure is still evolving. Dearing's proposals for the national curriculum mean that GNVQs will be introduced into years 10 and 11 in schools, giving a welcome vocational option and beginning to overcome the curriculum barrier at age 16. This opens up new opportunities for collaboration between schools and their local colleges, which could broaden the experience of learners and make provision more cost-effective.

GNVQs have attracted a certain amount of controversy, resulting from their place in the national strategy – in particular, a critique articulated by Professor Alan Smithers (1993). The debate has centred on whether assessment-led approaches to the curriculum give students a coherent educational experience, and on whether standards have been achieved.

Inspection evidence from the FEFC and OFSTED, as well as research conducted for the Employment Department, indicates that there has been a range of important problems in the delivery of GNVQs, particularly relating to assessment and the standards of achievement (FEFC Inspectorate 1994; OFSTED 1994; Wolf *et al.* 1994).

Some difficulties stem from the introduction of a radically different approach to vocational education. NCVQ and the validating bodies (BTEC, RSA and CGLI) have publicly stated their wish to give GNVQs a period of stability to demonstrate the achievement of appropriate common standards. This period will require efforts to consolidate, co-ordinate and clarify the GNVQ structure.

There are some areas in which institutions need to be particularly sensitive to the difficulties inherent in the GNVQ approach.

1. Assessment-led curriculum

GNVQs specify the assessable outcomes that students should achieve through their programme of studies. An assessment-led curriculum specifies outcomes, around which a range of suitable provision may be built. This approach is contrary to the more usual one, which specifies a course of study and a discrete knowledge base which is then assessed. The FEU (1992) has usefully distinguished between unitised frameworks for assessment and modular schemes of provision, which are often confused. There are considerable gains in flexibility from unitised assessment, and for keeping the curriculum up-to-date and responsive to needs in the vocational area.

Nonetheless, there is some concern – highlighted by Professor Smithers – that in some institutions assessment units are being treated as the syllabus for provision. If treated this way a very mechanical and fragmented approach to the programme results, lacking educational coherence. GNVQs are intended to provide a dynamic interrelationship of knowledge and skill applied by the student to real and simulated situations, which

are suggested by the range statements. However, it is up to the institution to put this into practice.

If the units of assessment are not a syllabus, then colleges and schools themselves are responsible for giving coherence. This may be achieved by developing schemes of work which integrate all the required elements of the GNVQ scheme. Schemes of work are an essential tool to address the problems of planning and course design that OFSTED and the FEFC Inspectorate found and, in particular, to ensure coverage of the units and the integration of core skills.

☞ See **Frameworks – Learning.**

2. Assessment processes

Both the FEFC Inspectorate and OFSTED have identified serious deficiencies in assessment processes. Similar concerns have emerged in the research conducted by Alison Wolf *et al.* for the Employment Department (ED). These concerns fall under four headings:

i. **The specifications and standards of GNVQs are not clear.**
The GNVQ system of units, elements, performance criteria, range statements, evidence indicators and grading criteria is inherently complex. The language used to apply this structure to particular vocational areas is often obscure. For some time NCVQ tried to persuade teachers that if they learnt the language its precision and elegance would be evident. But as with the emperor and his new clothes, the inspectors have confirmed what many suspected – some specifications and criteria are ambiguous, or fail to establish the standard. 'There was much confusion surrounding the standard of work expected of students. A consequence of this confusion was that teachers had sometimes set inappropriate assignments' (FEFC Inspectorate 1994); 'In only a quarter of schools were the teachers entirely confident about the standards to be applied to the GNVQ work.' (OFSTED 1994)

ii. **Standards of assessment are variable.**
The ED research found substantial differences amongst centres in their approach to assessment and grading. This was confirmed by the FEFC in a much larger sample: 'There were differences between colleges, and between areas of work within the same college, in the thoroughness of the assessment process. In consequence, the standards set for students' achievement varied.' (FEFC Inspectorate)

Particular problems have been found with grading. A wide variation in procedures was found by the ED research in further education. In schools: 'The grading themes and the guidance provided by the NCVQ on their implementation were not sufficiently clear ... In more than a third of schools visited it was found that the grading system was not clearly understood by staff.' (OFSTED)

iii. **Processes of verification are variable.**
Considerable variation has been noted in the standards of internal verification: 'Across the further education sector as a whole internal verification systems are not yet working well for GNVQ programmes ...' (FEFC Inspectorate); 'Arrangements for verifying work within schools and even between courses in the same school were very variable.' (OFSTED)

Shortcomings were also apparent in the system of external verification: 'Many GNVQ co-ordinators would have welcomed more effective criticism' (OFSTED). In part this stems from the difference between verification and moderation: 'Their initial brief, to check that assessment and grading systems were in place, was a narrow one ... [and] prevented them from sampling students' work effectively and influencing standards sufficiently.' (FEFC Inspectorate)

Inspectors also found that the different procedures of BTEC, CGLI and RSA were perceived by providers to lead to different standards for verification and for centre approval.

iv. **The assessment and recording system is excessively bureaucratic.**
'We consider that the current GNVQ grading and assessment system is unmanageable in the long- or medium-term. This is because the documentation and paperwork involved are inherently unwieldy: and because the amount of time required for assessment will be unsustainable as student numbers increase. The unmanageability of the system is not simply a transitional phenomenon, but derives from the nature of the assessment process.' (Wolf *et al.* 1994)

These difficulties are reflected in widely different practices in grading, often determined by the need to manage and control the assessment process. The FEFC Inspectorate report instances the volume of documentation for recording as a problem that must be addressed.

NCVQ is responding to these criticisms in a six point programme, announced by Ministers in March 1994, which will substantially effect GNVQs in 1995. The points are as follows:

- **Tightening of the external testing regime** (see below).
- **Review of the role of external verifiers.** Cross-centre moderation of standards has subsequently become a focus of training for external verifiers, and improvements in external verification should be apparent.
- **Clarification of grading criteria.** NCVQ has started to respond, introducing quality criteria for grading, but this remains an area of some difficulty.
- **Clarification of the knowledge and understanding required in each unit.** This concern is being addressed by NCVQ in the review of unit specifications. The result should be a clearer and fuller specification of the body of knowledge, as well as standards which provide a clear basis for assessment.

- **Greater clarity of expression and avoidance of jargon in guidance to teachers**, with backup through regional support networks.
- **Common criteria and consistency of interpretation in the approval of centres offering GNVQs.** Vocational awarding bodies are moving towards more consistent procedures.

☞ These issues are addressed in **Frameworks – Assessment** and *managing programmes* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**). Those who require practical assistance in ensuring standards will find useful a handbook by Ellie Johnson Searle: **Developing assignments for GNVQ** (Learning Partners 1994). This gives a systematic approach to mapping and interpreting GNVQ specifications and standards in developing assignments.

3. External tests

The current concern for standards is reflected in GNVQs by the introduction of external tests. Former BTEC provision which adopted project/assignment-based continuous assessment and delegated responsibility for assessment (subject to moderation) has suffered much the same criticism attached to 100 per cent coursework variants of GCSE. In the case of BTEC, however, there is less evidence that these concerns are justified.

The external tests were a late imposition intended to standardise outcomes and add rigour. They have not been a notable success. The tests have proved confusing to students, and have been accused of lacking substance. Students initially suffered high failure rates, which teachers have responded to by coaching explicitly for the tests, thus undermining the intentions of the programme. Although some improvements have been made, both inspection bodies found aspects which give continuing cause for concern.

The assessment regime for GNVQs may be further tightened as a result of:

- the variability in standards of assignment-based assessment found in inspection;
- FEFC Inspectorate and OFSTED concern at the standards of GNVQ Intermediate;
- the general tendency of the Department for Education (DfE) towards examination models of assessment.

Any such development is to be regretted. One strength of the old BTEC provision was that it offered real alternatives in learning styles and assessment patterns to an academic model which was disabling to many students of sufficient real world ability. Such students (usually in the second quartile of attainment – i.e. those for whom the NTETs have been devised) found that BTEC qualifications provided an effective alternative route into higher education, where many of them have flourished.

GNVQs aim to offer students a route that is equal to but different from GCSE and A levels. That distinctiveness is not just one of vocational

emphasis. If policy makers really do believe in choice in post-16 education, then the difference must not just be one of content, but also in the ways students learn, and how their ability is assessed.

☞ See **Frameworks – Assessment.**

4. Core skills

The stress on core skills typifies the original and innovative thinking that is apparent in many aspects of GNVQ. Core skills address directly the requirements for students to be skilful and self-motivated learners, and are essential to students' success in the programme. The core skills system is, however, a sophisticated one and is presented in quite complex language, which is vulnerable to the general criticism of obscurity in GNVQ specifications.

The system may present a unique problem – both teachers and learners can find some of the concepts almost equally difficult. Part of this difficulty is that core skills draw upon some elements of learning skills and some life skills, whilst other elements of learning skills are defined in the grading criteria.

Unlike BTEC common skills, core skills must be demonstrated in application to the vocational studies. To require all core skill delivery to be integrated into the vocational context assumes the vocational teachers have the ability to deliver all the core skills. This is not always the case. There are a number of reasons why it is difficult to deliver all core skills through the vocational units, but mainly it is because not all core skills lend themselves to meaningful integration into every vocational programme. Hence separate maths and English lessons are being used to cover the gaps, with accompanying loss of motivation, or drop-in workshops are used to support core skills delivery, with mixed success. For some learners, core skills present particular difficulty, so they cannot succeed in the whole award even though they achieve all the vocational units.

☞ See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

5. Approaches to teaching and learning

GNVQ students come from a much wider range of prior attainment than those who successfully follow the general academic route. Not all will come to the programme as skilful learners. There is, however, an implicit model of a successful GNVQ student. She or he will be:

- a self-confident person, capable of agreeing a plan for their activity with their tutor;
- possessed of the skills to execute that plan;
- motivated and sufficiently mature to carry it out;
- responsible for the management of their own learning;
- able to use all available resources – teachers, libraries, computers, resource centres, workplaces;

- capable of assembling a portfolio of evidence to show what they have achieved;
- able to cope with a wide range of learning experiences which will be devised for them; and
- able to complete satisfactorily a variety of assessable activities.

Very few students will have all these skills and abilities when they join the programme. Such skills have to be taught and developed. Teaching and learning for GNVQs thus becomes a very explicit process, concerned not just with the vocational content of the programme – i.e. the knowledge and skills – but also with increasing learners' self-confidence and developing the skills of learning.

☞ See *teaching and learning* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

Conclusion

GNVQs are the culmination of the far-reaching changes that have occurred in vocational education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Despite the problems and issues, GNVQs are a fundamentally sound development. It still requires some time for difficulties to be resolved and will require continued collaboration between teachers and the awarding bodies and, ultimately, NCVQ.

There is now a more coherent pattern in the post-16 sector, with NVQs providing the skills training, A levels the theoretical, academic knowledge, and GNVQs giving the applied, vocational knowledge base. GNVQs may attract learners away from A levels (particularly those who were deemed capable of succeeding in only two subjects). In this respect, the development of modular A level syllabuses is a significant event, for which GNVQs are undoubtedly a catalyst. Students on mixed A level and GNVQ programmes may become much more common as a result.

Has the introduction of GNVQs helped to rationalise the post-16 vocational portfolio? It is clearly a step in the right direction. Much remains to be done and we are still a long way from a fully integrated post-compulsory curriculum. If we are to achieve that, we may wish to look closely at what is happening in Scottish FE and set up a single awarding body, equivalent to the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC). We may also need to remove the concept of the 'gold standard' of A levels so that vocational education really does have parity of esteem.

Development methodology

Supporting learning, the first volume of the *Frameworks for managing learning* series (The Staff College and Learning Partners 1994), outlined the familiar FEU model of the curriculum development cycle of REVIEW – PLAN – IMPLEMENT – REVIEW and proposed a criticism of some of its limitations. The argument was that, whilst this was one possible way in which development might take place, the real function of this model was to carry out *post hoc* rationalisation of development decisions reached in entirely other ways.

There are three levels of activity at which the development process can be conducted:

- **Strategic organisation** – making a coherent framework for development, to identify the purpose and demonstrate rational means of achieving it.
- **Problem-solving** – finding new solutions to difficult problems in ways which express important values or goals and which respond to real world constraints and opportunities.
- **Detailed development** – implementing proposals in ways that work, and showing people the benefits of change.

Real world development work can commence at any of these levels and is often conducted as a 'dialogue' between them. It is also a situation that often requires lateral solutions for difficult problems. Development work (or strategic planning) gives expression to important values, which may be explicit in an institution's mission statement, or may be implicit. It takes place in a specific context, with its own history and opportunities. For all of these reasons it is difficult to provide development solutions 'off the shelf'.

The conception of educational development used here is that of a process. In this process there is an interplay between the institutional goals (and their embedded values), the broad strategic dispositions for their institution which good managers carry with them, and the practical concerns and constraints of any particular place and moment. This is not a linear process – rather, it is one that may involve much discussion and movement from one level of concern to another. It does not allocate a necessary primacy or causality to strategic planning, though it is at the strategic level that development work is most appropriately co-ordinated.

Educational change may often seem very varied and incoherent. What matters is the intelligent management of change, which harnesses and draws out the benefits from the various forces at work and makes a relevant and coherent response at institutional level.

Development work can only be effective if it is well-managed and supported. Efficient management should seek to harmonise the various levels of strategic, problem-solving and detailed development in ways that respond to the context in which development is taking place.

Development occurs where there is effective mobilisation of human, physical and financial resources, to achieve a particular end or purpose. It usually involves change in systems or provision, over a specified timescale. The following are ways to enable the process.

1. Be clear about purposes and outcomes

The aims of an initiative will not necessarily be established by following a particular development methodology. They may become apparent through the process of proposing solutions to problems. It is still important that the purposes of development work should be clear. With the greater emphasis on formal planning in educational institutions, these purposes can often be taken directly from the aims of the development plan and provide both a context for and an explanation of the work.

More important are the purposes which can be expressed as objectives or outcomes, for these provide targets and measures for what is achieved. It is not unusual for development teams to spend a little time initially in changing the basis on which they are required to work (e.g. from the requirements of an external funding body to those of a target group of students), in order to conduct their task to better purpose, and to establish more appropriate objectives. Objectives and intended outcomes may also be modified in the light of experience. Opportunity for such change is best built into the development process, via a system of formal review, otherwise there is the possibility of displacement, where difficult objectives are replaced informally by more congenial but less relevant ones.

2. Ensure senior managerial support

It is easy for busy senior managers to lose track of development work. If they are not well-informed they may well underestimate its value. Other managers in the institution may not accept the work, or may seek to diminish its priority.

These difficulties can be overcome if a member of the senior management team acts as a project sponsor. The sponsor's role is not to lead the project but to support it by:

- representing the project to other senior managers, and making sure it is taken into account when relevant issues of resources or strategy are discussed;
- making sure that project staff are given all relevant information about decisions in the institution, or by outside bodies;

- maintaining the profile of the project with middle managers, and by drawing them into activity that supports and contributes to the success of the project;
- maintaining an overview, and ensuring that the project continues to address its main purposes.

3. Involve all interest groups

It is not unknown for managers or groups of staff to feel excluded from development work where they feel they have particular experience to contribute, but which is located elsewhere in the institution. At worst this can result in conflict or nonco-operation. It is useful to establish from the outset who expects to have a legitimate share in the development work. Advisory groups are one mechanism by which different interests can be involved actively in support of a project. However, with an area such as GNVQs the interested parties may be very numerous.

Other staff can be drawn in by:

- an invitation to all interested parties to make a personal or written submission to a development meeting at an early stage, to discuss directions and existing activity;
- discussion between the development co-ordinator and identified managers or groups of staff – these may be set up by the sponsor;
- informal networking, often the most effective route in small and informal institutions, but may be more difficult in large and complex institutions with very formal decision-making structures;
- a regular flow of information – e.g. regular update sheets which invite comment and response.

4. Plan to clear deadlines

Development projects will generally produce a plan of operation which will be reviewed regularly. One of the most important roles of a managerial sponsor is to ensure that planning is linked into broader strategic decision-making by:

- taking account of institutional development planning in the operational plan;
- advising on deadlines for work to be completed, or for proposals to be made to coincide with the institutional decision-making cycle.

Timescales are fixed not just as a reasonable span in which proposals can be implemented and evaluated, but also for the times when information has to be available and decisions made: e.g. at what time is evidence available from quality review systems, and when does it need to be fed into them? What information is required for next year's budgetary round and when? How and when can we write in an amendment to policy documents?

Development work is most effective in influencing policy if it can provide information and proposals at times when college managers are making the decisions. This means that information on the decision-making cycle should be known to development staff. Such information is not always widely available.

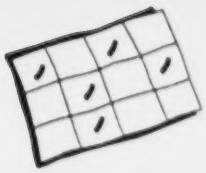
Conclusion

Curriculum development is a process requiring careful management and support. The process is one which exploits the opportunities specific to particular contexts, as well as responding to the more general requirements and constraints of national policies. Development work takes place at the three levels outlined above – generally simultaneously – and the role of effective management is to ensure the harmonisation of these levels, for what is achieved at one level will have repercussions at others. Effective development work is the synthesis of theory and practice. The process is not a linear or cyclical one; it more closely resembles a dialectic. It is difficult to lay a blueprint across the process, and there are many legitimate starting points. However, there are criteria and working rules of the sort outlined above which facilitate the work of development groups. It is most important that the issues and options available in any particular area of development are identified and addressed. It is to this purpose that the **Frameworks** materials are devoted.

The materials are presented to facilitate development work at any or all of the three levels. For an explanation, refer to 'How to use the materials' in the **Introduction** to this pack (p4).

The **Frameworks** matrix (see pp42-43 for a schematic view) presents a broad strategic view of the issues in a way which allows a conventional development process to take place. It permits developers and managers to take a broad overview of the process, to review existing provision, and to formulate clear strategic goals. The structure of the worksheets, which prompt review and development activity, is designed to assist the development process.

If your approach is a problem-solving one, or if you are initiating detailed development, you will find that the materials are organised in such a way that you can start anywhere – at the issues that most concern you – and follow the system of cross-referencing by ☛ *keywords*. This will also be of particular help to people wishing to extend or review an existing system.



Using the Frameworks Materials

The **Contents** section at the beginning of this pack provides a complete list of all the sections, headings and sub-headings. There are three ways of finding your way around the **Frameworks** materials; you can use the way that seems most natural to you.

1. The materials are identified and cross-referenced by ☞*keywords*. See p6 of the **Introduction** for an explanation of the system. You will also find a full list of the ☞*keywords* in the **Contents** section. Note: ☞*keywords* correspond to the key issue topics comprising the materials in the **Frameworks** sections.

2 The materials are designed with location diagrams. This will help you to see easily which materials are grouped together – helpful if you have pulled them out of the ring-binder to use them.

3 The development matrix on pp42-43 gives a visual overview of where the key issue topics are grouped. One axis is made up of the five themes of the **Frameworks** sections – curriculum organisation, delivering learning, supporting learners, assessing learning and managing achievement. The other axis comprises the three stages of the learning process taken from the FEFC funding model. This has the advantage of suggesting where funding for various aspects of GNVQ development might be identified.

For further material on learning support, refer to the previous Staff College/Learning Partners development pack, **Supporting learning** (the first in the *Frameworks for managing learning* series, published by The Staff College and Learning Partners 1994). Tutorial systems and action planning are the subject of the next publication in this series – **Tutoring for achievement**.

GNVQ DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

The keywords, in italics, correspond to the key issue topics comprising the materials in the **Frameworks** sections.

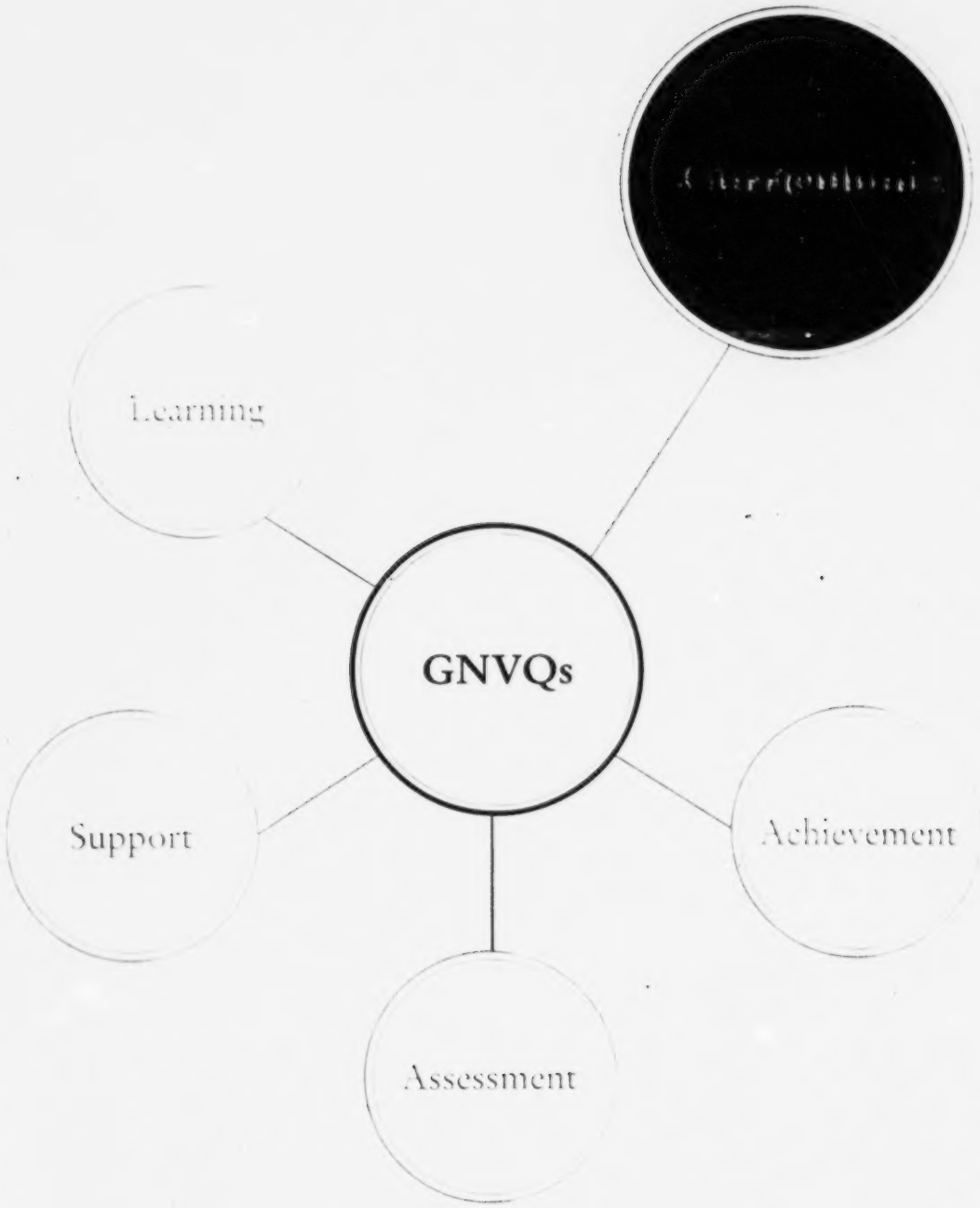
ASPECTS OF LEARNING PROGRAMME

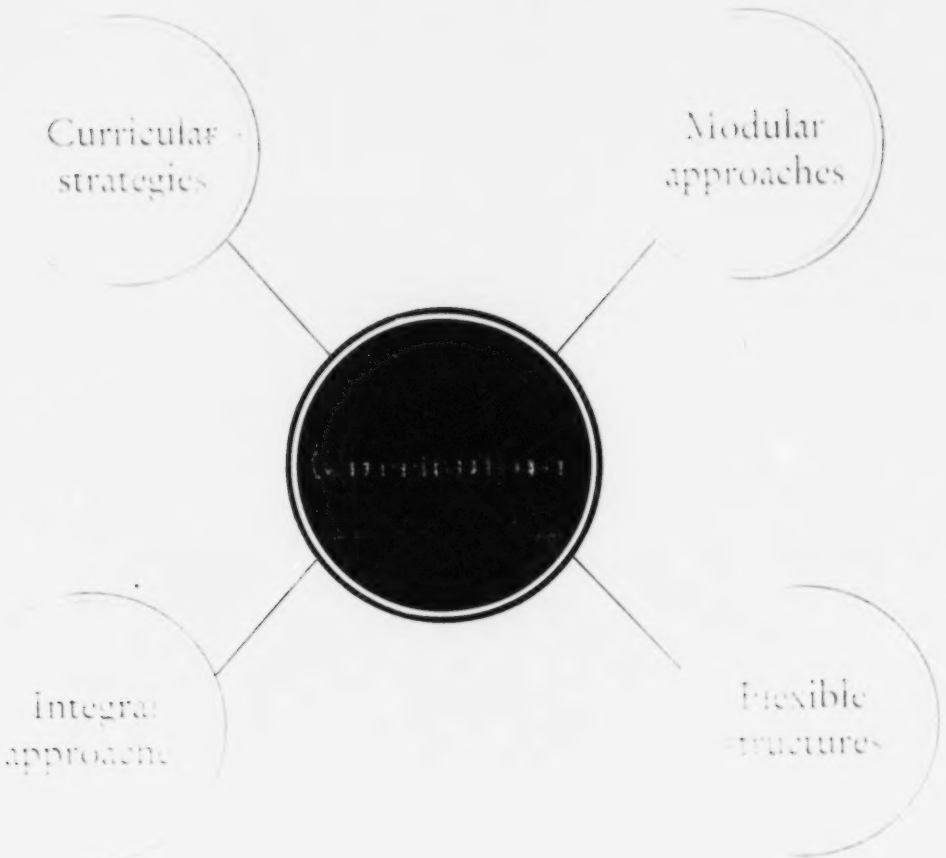
STAGES OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

	CURRICULUM	LEARNING	SUPPORT	ASSESSMENT	ACHIEVEMENT
ENTRY					
Marketing and outreach	*Curricular strategies*				
Diagnostic assessment and APL		*Induction*	*Initial guidance*	*Initial review*	
Guidance and counselling			*Initial guidance*		
Registration and induction		*Induction*			

	CURRICULUM	LEARNING	SUPPORT	ASSESSMENT	ACHIEVEMENT
ON PROGRAMME					
Learning programme	*Modular approaches* *Integral approaches* *Flexible structures*	*Teaching and learning* *Core skills*			*Managing programmes*
Assessing and recording progress				*On-course assessment*	*Managing programmes*
Guidance and counselling	*Curricular strategies*		*Tutorial systems*		
Support services	*Curricular strategies*	*Core skills*	*Learning support*		*Staff support*
Establishing an ethos	*Flexible structures*	*Induction*			*Staff support*
ON EXIT					
Assessment and recording of achievement			*Tutorial systems*	*Credit accumulation*	*Quality review* *Managing programmes*
Guidance and counselling			*Exit guidance*		

Frameworks – Curriculum





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Curriculum organisation issues

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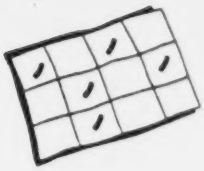


Curriculum organisation issues

As the **Context** section makes clear, GNVQs are part of a larger reorganisation of the curriculum. In determining curriculum organisation strategies to meet the requirements of GNVQs, managers may also wish to bear in mind likely developments in A levels and NVQs, and to make judgements about some whole curriculum issues, including:

- flexibility of organisation and delivery;
- the development of mixed programmes (e.g. GNVQs and A levels);
- transferable assessment (e.g. credit accumulation and credit transfer).

At the time of writing these matters are still ones of judgement – the Government's attitude to credit accumulation, the development of A levels and issues of flexible progression through the whole curriculum remains in flux. The relationship of education and training remains a matter of controversy. Currently, the Government is more inclined to seek specific solutions (such as the Advanced Diploma) than more general processes for achieving coherence, but this may change as a result of the Dearing review.

In consequence, there are some general curriculum issues to be faced, as well as those specific to GNVQs. Some issues that institutions will wish to take account of are as follows:

- The primacy of assessment, expressed crudely as the emphasis on outcomes and stress on formal examination or testing. In another sense, however, it can be seen as assessment that is increasingly standardised and content and delivery that are becoming more flexible.
- An emphasis on individual learning programmes, with a consequent requirement for flexibility in the organisation of the curriculum. It is no longer assumed that students will be required to commence education in September and continue for a one or two year course. The opportunity for staggered starts or non-standard timescales is available. It is also possible for students to proceed at their own pace or to their own level within any allotted timespan.
- The demand for flexible organisation and delivery, which is inherent in GNVQs. This flexibility is expressed in different ways through:
  - an overall curriculum organisation that allows the required elements of choice to the students;
  - a varied and flexible range of delivery: classroom, resource and individual activity based;

- a system of tutorial support which helps students to plan their learning, monitors their progress with the plan and tracks achievement;
- the availability of guidance on key choices and support for the development of key learning skills.

- The clarity of progression routes, which raises the question of curriculum coherence and is not yet resolved in policy. For students the question is, for example, whether the opportunity to mix GNVQs with A levels is an appropriate one, and for the institution, whether this is possible. Also, are students equally able to progress from GNVQs at higher education level into a general vocational provision (Higher National Diploma (HND)), or a suitable degree, or into professional level training under the NVQ system. It may require initiative by the individual institution to address such issues.

This section of the **Frameworks** addresses the questions of overall curricular strategy and the various approaches to organising the curriculum for GNVQs, particularly:

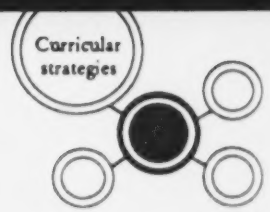
- the relative advantages of modular and integrated approaches; and
- the achievement of flexibility through curriculum organisation.

As you read through each key issue topic you will find a series of checklists and options lists, and at the end of each topic there are also activity sheets as appropriate. **Audit sheets** allow you to assess where you are now in your management of the curriculum; the **Strategy sheet** will help you to clarify and evaluate your options; and the **Action planning sheet** will help you to develop your response to the issues.

NB: not all types of activity sheet are included with each key issue topic. See below for a matrix of the activity sheets included for curriculum organisation issues (p48).

Curriculum organisation – activity sheets included

Key issues	Audit sheet	Strategy sheet	Action planning sheet
Curricular strategies Modular approaches Integral approaches	✓	✓	✓
Flexible structures	✓		



CURRICULAR STRATEGIES

Organising the GNVQ curriculum

There is an explicit requirement for flexibility in the organisation of the GNVQ curriculum. In consequence, there are clear strategic choices to be made, which is the subject of this key issue topic. The development of alternative approaches is considered in the following key issue topics on ☞ *modular approaches* and *integral approaches* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**).

☞ GNVQs also require flexibility in teaching and learning and the use of resources, which other **Frameworks** topics address. See *teaching and learning* (in **Frameworks – Learning**) and *flexible structures* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**).

In **Implementing GNVQs – a guide for centres**, BTEC has identified the 'learning phase' as the building block of provision. A learning phase is defined as a grouping of learning activities:

- over a specified period of time;
- covering a coherent group of elements;
- with planned learning experiences which may be:
  - teacher-directed,
  - workshop activities, or
  - self-directed, and
- which can be assessed coherently.

BTEC (1993a)

BTEC suggests two possible models for designing and organising learning phases:

- Integrating elements coherently across units – thus accumulating elements of achievement.
- Integrating elements coherently within a unit – thus accumulating units of achievement.

Learning phases can be devised and combined in different ways, to provide a clear strategic option for curriculum organisation.

Strategic options for GNVQ curriculum organisation

There are two clear strategic approaches to provision: modular and integral. The following discussion is consistent with the FEU's terminology that:

- a module is a piece of learning;
- a unit is a piece of assessment.

(Tony Tate (1993) Establishing a common language: modules and units. **The CATalyst.** No 1, July)

All GNVQ delivery will contain modules (of learning), just as all will need to integrate elements of achievement – notably core skills with vocational studies. ☞ See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**). However, some GNVQ programmes organise their curriculum in such a way as to constitute distinct modular or integrated structures.

- **Modular structures.** These have been largely adopted in further education, drawing on previous experience from BTEC courses. Modular structures provide a curriculum which is divided into sections based upon clear and discrete groupings of underpinning knowledge and skills development. In GNVQs these modules generally reflect the units of assessment, and so students will accumulate elements of achievement within units as a result. There are possible degrees of modularity:
  - freestanding modular GNVQ programmes;
  - modularisation of GNVQs and selected NVQ and A level provision;
  - modularisation of the whole curriculum.
- **Integrated structures** are more commonly found in schools and have often been based on the City & Guilds Diploma in Vocational Education scheme. Schools are able to draw upon their experience of delivering the national curriculum. Integral strategies will develop a pattern of projects or themes around which teaching is organised and assessment is conducted, and this will cross unit or even vocational area boundaries. Integrated approaches lead to the assessment of elements and the accumulation of achievement across units. Once again there are degrees to which provision can be integrated:
  - integration of units within a GNVQ vocational area;
  - integration of units between vocational areas;
  - integration of different levels of provision;
  - integration of the GNVQ programme with other programmes such as A level.

In practice, all approaches to GNVQs will show both some degree of modularity and some elements of integration. The permutations are numerous and need to be carefully selected to reflect the nature and

opportunities of the institution. One determining factor will be the number of students following the GNVQ programme compared to the number of occupational areas and optional units available. Where large numbers of students are involved in GNVQs it is more likely that modular approaches can be most effectively managed. Where numbers are small in relation to the choice of study, then integrated approaches are most attractive.

Options list: Strategic approaches to GNVQs

1. **Modular structures**
   The modular approach tends to reflect the units of assessment, and therefore will prepare students for assessment, which integrates elements coherently within a unit. In effect students will study a broad topic area on which a number of assignments and assessment activities will be based. Modules may be short and intensive (e.g. 10 weeks), or longer but with a lesser weekly time commitment.

   Advantages

   - Modular approaches have the advantage of being simple to organise, and give a coherent structure to enable students to understand the overall shape of their studies.

   Disadvantages

   - Short modules give little time for skills development, and assume learning skills are adequate to achieve good final performance.
   - Opportunities to bring a range of knowledge and skills to bear as an issue do not occur as readily.

2. **Integrated approaches**
   The integral approach tends to concentrate on cross-unit projects, which accumulate elements of achievement. The degree to which these span vocational areas and levels will vary.

   Advantages

   - Integrated approaches have the advantage that learning can be organised around projects and assignments, which can give a greater degree of 'real world' interest to students, and can easily allow for the development of learning skills.

Disadvantages

- Coherence at unit level and the rigorous coverage of underpinning knowledge may be lost, leading to some sacrifice in the overall standard of achievement.
- The external tests make large scale integration more difficult unless some teaching specific to the tests is adopted – which is not in the spirit of GNVQs.

There is no right or wrong approach but whichever is adopted:

- should be appropriate to the institution and its other programmes;
- should offer a programme of education that develops a coherent foundation of understanding, which can be demonstrated through application and achievement;
- must achieve appropriate degrees of rigour, and develop equivalent levels of knowledge, understanding and achievement;
- must fulfil all the assessment requirements.

The whole GNVQ curriculum

Whatever basic strategy is adopted, the curriculum for GNVQs will need to integrate all aspects of the programme. Curriculum planning will need to address:

- initial guidance and opportunities for pre-course sampling or tasters;
- induction;
- tutorial structures;
- core skills;
- additional and optional units;
- learning support;
- exit guidance;
- the use of topics for planning learning;
- opportunities for assessment and grading.

Curriculum strategy will therefore be required to give an overview of the whole programme, and to make important choices about the way aspects

of the programme work together. These aspects are addressed in the remainder of the **Frameworks** sections and you may wish to return to *curricular strategies* after reading them.

In making decisions there will be a number of determining factors:

- your own institutional context;
- advice issued by NCVQ, BTEC, RSA or CGLI (see References in **Resources** section);
- funding models;
- the needs of the student group.

Student need and a customer orientation

Often in the pressure of development, student needs will be subordinated to other financial or bureaucratic influences. However, the ultimate test of any programme is how far it fulfils students' needs, which may be partly indicated by retention and successful completion data.

The educational marketing literature has considered ways of meeting student need in some detail, and we can usefully draw on this literature. In particular the concept of 'customer oriented marketing' is helpful, since it sees educational marketing as fundamentally a guidance process.

Customer oriented marketing will:

- **Provide clear and simple information**, to convey the intentions of the programme, and to make sure the range of provision is understood. This will be helped if the aims and strategy of the GNVQ programme are similarly clear and straightforward.
- **Raise awareness**. People should understand the role and purpose of your GNVQ programme; they should also know where it leads and how it may meet their needs.
- **Define expectations**. The expectations of students should be identified in pre-entry guidance. The programme should meet a wide range of realistic expectations for quality of teaching, availability of resources, coherence of the programme, and opportunities to progress.
- **Identify and meet needs**. Needs will always require some continuing research, but many needs are already well known to educational establishments. For the GNVQ entry you should:
  - identify desired outcomes and progression routes;
  - identify the factors that contribute to retention and successful completion, including:
    - initial guidance, to ensure the appropriate choice of programme and level;
    - a variety of teaching approaches, to meet a range of learning needs and styles;

- strategies for effective tutorial support;
- the availability of learning support;
- support and guidance for progression.

- provide elements of added value through additional units, enrichment activities or multi-programme study;

- provide opportunity for customer feedback on curriculum and delivery as a part of the quality review process.

☞ See *quality review* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

You may well consider student need as the prime determinant of curriculum strategy, despite the pressures of systems and funding.

In **Staying the course**, BTEC has published a survey which identifies those elements of the whole curriculum, including learning support and personal tutorial systems, that promote retention by meeting the real needs of students. The conclusions of this report are directly relevant to GNVQs:

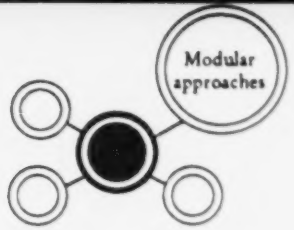
> The project has identified personal attention as being the basic principle behind good retention rates. The more effectively a centre can develop its systems and programmes to:
>
> - provide support for the student,
> - help the student make the most of learning opportunities,
> - maintain the student's motivation, and
> - listen to and learn from the student,
>
> the better its completion rates are likely to be.
>
> This requires attention to marketing, enrolment, induction, programme design, learner support, tutorial systems, teaching and learning styles, counselling and progression advice, quality systems, and staff development.
> (BTEC 1993b)

GNVQ curriculum organisation checklist

- The need to encourage coherent and vocationally realistic delivery.
- The use of topics around which learning is planned.
- The need for realistic assessment opportunities.
- The danger of over-assessment.
- The need to enable easy tracking of learner progress.
- Encouraging a multi-disciplinary team approach to programme design and assessment.
- The identification of team responsibilities.
- The need to allow flexibility for roll on, roll off access.
- Facilitating access to units across a variety of programmes, particularly for additional units.

Source: BTEC (1993a) **Implementing GNVQs – a guide for centres**

Notes



MODULAR APPROACHES

GNVQs are designed as a broad-based vocational qualification. Their aim is to provide students with the core skills and underpinning knowledge in a specific vocational area, to act as the springboard to further work-based vocational study through NVQs or higher level GNVQs, HNDs and degrees.

The guidelines provided by all the validating bodies allow the GNVQ programme to be delivered in a modular format. Generally, modules will correspond to units of assessment containing elements and performance criteria which can be taught in isolation from other units. Each module will provide learning experiences that integrate elements coherently within a unit and will provide a credit value in its own right when achieved by the student. The modular structure is accomplished by using the mandatory, optional and additional units from within a specific GNVQ and from other GNVQs. This allows a number of opportunities for flexible design of the curriculum and increased student choice, but it does impose a number of constraints on the management of the course and the richness of the learning experience. The case for modular delivery needs to be examined at a number of different levels.

Why modular?

- There is cohesion within units (but reduced cohesion across units).
- Delivery problems are reduced and the structure is more comprehensible to students.
- There is the potential for more flexible programmes and more student choice.
- The potential for accrediting prior learning is increased.
- Part-time study routes can be achieved more easily by students and, with unit accreditation, modules can be offered on a stand-alone basis to outside organisations.
- Many FE establishments have experience in modular programmes from other qualifications (but this may not be true for many secondary providers).

To achieve the maximum benefits within any individual modular GNVQ programme, it is important that there is some compatibility with other

GNVQ programmes and other potentially accessible courses of study, e.g. A levels.

Modular programmes

Modular programmes assume centralised planning and curriculum management which allows GNVQ students to pick freely from other programmes where appropriate and from other types of qualifications. This approach has the following requirements:

- An agreed timetable structure which allows compatibility between programmes and is realistic about student choices.
- Appropriate guidance for student choice, to ensure programmes are coherent – 'pick and mix' is unlikely to be a satisfactory approach.
☞ See *initial guidance* in **Frameworks – Support**.
- An agreed common approach to curriculum planning and delivery, especially where students will be crossing programme boundaries.
- A tracking system that can follow students across programme boundaries to check achievement, and tutorial support that checks progress and manages learning throughout the programme.
- A clear system of communication at all levels of management.
- A college management structure that reflects the needs of a modular structure.

Options list: Modular structures

1. **Total modular structures**
   A whole curriculum approach, which fits all college or school activities into the same modular grid and timetable. It will exhibit all the characteristics outlined above.

   Advantages

   - Maximum student flexibility and choice.
   - More effective use of teaching and learning resources.
   - Potential efficiency gains in the management of programmes.
   - Improved tracking of students.
   - Reduction of subject barriers and enhanced staff development.
   - Improvement in communications within the organisation.
   - Facilitates credit accumulation.

Disadvantages

- Centralised planning, especially timetabling, requires flexibility at programme level. Increased lead times require greater planning of the curriculum.
- Programme management autonomy is reduced once initial planning is complete. This can cause some staff motivation problems.
- Communication needs to be precise, comprehensive and co-ordinated.
- Decisions need to be taken early and are very difficult to change.
- Students may not want a lot of choice on a programme.
- Subjects outside GNVQ programmes may not fit easily into a modular structure.
- Initial costs for centralised planning, organisation and tracking can be high.
- The current structure of A levels does not fit well into a modular programme.
- May be difficult to achieve in large institutions with split site working.

2. **Selected modular programme**

Many organisations have developed a reduced form of the above by restricting the modular structure to just GNVQ programmes plus other routes students are likely to take – i.e. selected A levels and NVQs. Many of the above criteria on modularity still apply and the advantages and disadvantages are similar. There are, however, some differences.

Advantages

- The central management task is reduced.
- There is increased autonomy at programme level.

Disadvantages

- Student choice is reduced.
- The benefits of large scale flexibility are lost.

3. **Freestanding modular programmes**

It is perfectly possible to adopt a modular structure for individual GNVQ programmes within an organisation and run them successfully.

Advantages

- There is increased autonomy at programme level.
- More straightforward methods of delivery are possible than through an integrated system.

Disadvantages

- Most of the advantages of a large scale modular programme are lost.
- Many of the disadvantages are retained.

Organisation of a modular scheme

When planning a modular delivery scheme, the following must be covered.

Student entitlement

An advanced level GNVQ needs a minimum of 12 units (eight mandatory, four optional) plus core skills. Any provision above this is at the discretion of the programme team, although it is accepted that 18 units is the equivalent of three A levels and this is what a number of centres now offer. Changes in funding mechanisms may have an influence on the size of future provision.

Programme structure

The units can be delivered in two, three or four modular blocks within the academic year and can be 10 or 15 weeks in duration, for example. Figures 7 and 8 show sample structures. These blocks do not always fit neatly into the standard terms, or end when external tests are set.

Figure 7: GNVQ Intermediate/Advanced block timetable (example a)

Year 1/ Year 2	Induction	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Assessment and other activities
	3 weeks	10 weeks	10 weeks	10 weeks	3 weeks

Figure 8: GNVQ Intermediate/Advanced block timetable (example b)

Year 1	Induction 3 weeks	Block 1 15 weeks	F* R R	Block 2 15 weeks	F R R	Work experience
Year 2	Work experience	Block 1 15 weeks	F R R	Block 2 15 weeks	F R R	ROA

*FRR = Formative review and recording

In the example shown in **Figure 7**, the students would study three units per block for approximately six hours per week on each unit. The assessment periods may be distributed at the end of blocks.

The example given in **Figure 8** shows longer blocks with four or five units which may be studied for about four hours per week. The review periods are situated at the end of blocks and work experience has been integrated.

Points to consider

- The order in which units are taken by students. Some need to be in block 1 whereas others can be placed anywhere in the structure.
- The phasing of mandatory, optional and additional units.
- The combination of modules offered to give a balanced programme and to help student motivation.
- The order of modules, which can help to spread teaching load evenly across the programme. There will normally need to be an element of tutor averaging within this type of structure.
- The organisation of core skills to be delivered through the modules, so students may acquire them in a useful order.
- The external assessment of the mandatory units, which does not always fit neatly into a modular scheme when specific dates are set for the external tests.
- Loss of programme cohesion, which happens when units are delivered as stand-alone modules.
- Resit arrangements, which can be difficult for students failing a number of end tests and requiring revision.
- Provision of a sequence of mandatory and optional units, which allows adequate evidence to be assembled for grading.

Modular learning strategies

The introduction of a modular scheme with block delivery, coupled with the nature of GNVQs themselves, has a number of implications for the learning strategies used on a programme.

Advantages

- Modules are subject-centred and self-sufficient; they can be taught and assessed in isolation as stand-alone units.
- Allows an individual, student-centred approach based around assignments to be adopted. The requirements for portfolio grading make some individual work essential on all units.
- Allows team teaching to combined groups, backed by tutorial sessions.
- Students have clearly defined topics to study.
- Learning is concentrated, with clear objectives and deadlines.
- Lecturers can develop specialisms over a period of time, i.e. module leaders.
- Adult and part-time students can access the curriculum more easily.
- Knowledge is tested through the external tests at the end of each module, so spreading the student workload.

Disadvantages

- Planning needs to be comprehensive and accurate.
- Systems once in place are inflexible and difficult to change.
- There is greatly reduced integration between units and some loss of cohesion.
- Illness is potentially more damaging for students or tutors because of the relatively large sections of work missed.
- There is less flexibility of assessment deadlines.
- Changed teaching strategies may have resource implications – e.g. larger delivery rooms/small tutorial rooms.
- Less flexibility to incorporate important one-off activities at short notice.
- Short completion deadlines for students' assessed work.
- Little time may be available for students to develop their learning skills, unless core skills are effectively integrated.

Modular delivery checklist

- Why do we want a modular scheme?
- How comprehensive does it need to be?
- How will it need to develop with the introduction of new GNVQs?
- Do we have the management structure to support a modular scheme?
- Do we need a common weekly timetable?
- Do we need a common college year?
- What is the student entitlement?
- Can we provide individual learning programmes?
- How can we track students' achievement through the system?
- Do we need to adopt new learning strategies?

Notes

INTEGRAL APPROACHES

Integration seeks to make connections between ideas, people and disciplines, in the belief that this is enriching and more closely mirrors real life. 'Doing it for real' is an important concept in vocational teaching.

Why integration?

- It lends itself to the use of real projects.
- It can bring together a range of students from different occupational areas.
- It can operate at all levels, between:
  - GNVQ occupational areas;
  - qualification levels;
  - units of the programme;
  - GNVQs and other programmes such as A level.
- It can be very flexible.
- It gives coherence to elements of assessment across units, thus accumulating elements of achievement.

In order to achieve these aims, there are some organisational requirements:

1. Timetabling needs to be as flexible as possible, to allow for groups pursuing different occupational areas to share some time, to enable collaboration and exchanges between students and between teachers.

   It should also be a principle that timetabling should not prevent people following a mixture of studies. Thus the GNVQ student should be able to:

   - work with people studying other occupational areas; and
   - follow a variety of programmes, perhaps combining an A level with GNVQ Advanced.

2. Careful planning prior to the programme is essential in order to:
   - ensure accurate coverage of the units;

- devise projects and assignments to exploit links between occupational areas;
- establish monitoring systems and documentation which enable student tracking and the recording of achievement.

Integrated programmes

The following matters need to be considered:

- Planning unit coverage.
- Integration with other GNVQ areas, NVQs, A levels and A/S levels.
- Delivery of core skills.
- Monitoring of student progress and achievement.
- Organisation and planning.
- Documentation.

Planning unit coverage

As a principle, the planning of an integrated approach should aim to extend into as many areas of the programme as possible.

In an integrated approach, an individual assignment should aim to:

- contribute to the coverage of a number of units;
- give coherence to elements within the programme by showing their relationship;
- reinforce skills and content, by showing their applications.

Example (from art and design intermediate)

1. Research on Pop Art (unit 3.1 – art and design) could also involve related art work (unit 1 – drawing and visual awareness).
2. If the project was then linked to producing Pop Art designs for T-shirts, students would be involved in practical art and design (unit 2).
3. If they did this for a customer, and did it 'for real', they would have to present their designs, which would link to unit 6 (presenting solutions in art and design).
4. They would also be edging into some of the territory of level three (for example, unit 6.3 – plan and monitor a brief).
5. There would be opportunities to assess communications core skills.

Advantages

- Students see the relevance of theory when it is related to practical work.
- Students feel encouraged to build skills because they perceive the need when it is real.
- This approach ensures variety and simultaneous progress on a number of fronts.
- It avoids artificial divisions.
- It is developmental, organic and more closely mirrors real life.

Disadvantages

- Coverage needs to be carefully mapped, so the teacher can be assured that the programme is being effectively and adequately covered.
- Coverage needs to be carefully documented so that the examiner can see where and how it takes place.
- Stretching credibility – coverage must be genuine and worthwhile.

Some considerations:

- A master profile sheet may be necessary, giving the main elements within each unit. These could easily be ticked to show the contribution of a particular project.
- Total coverage of a unit should not be claimed because it has been touched on within an integrated project – only those elements where evidence is available are admissible.
- Other assignments would aim to contribute as well, so that the unit is being covered in some depth through a variety of approaches.
- This kind of coverage, which operates horizontally as well as vertically, can give real substance to a portfolio, where students are seen to be presenting briefs and design solutions to customers on a regular basis and making practical application of their theoretical research.
- Ways need to be found to ensure that students remain responsible for their learning and that they understand the process of assessment.

Integration with other GNVQ areas

Integration at this level can also be achieved through the use of integrated assignments, although it does impose extra constraints on planning and is demanding of staff time.

Advantages

- Programmes can reinforce each other.

- Students work in an interdependent manner, and have respect for each other's deadlines – particularly if they are of practical significance.
- Stimulates work with customers.
- Students develop their personal and interpersonal skills in dealing with each other on a professional basis.

Disadvantages

- It may not be convenient for groups to interconnect.
- Close collaboration between staff is necessary in planning programmes, and this can be time-consuming.
- Students can learn a lot from working together, but there is always a risk of any failures resulting in mutual recriminations. It is necessary for staff to set and maintain the right tone.

At a minimum, integration with NVQs or A levels can be achieved through joint participation in units, and in some instances assignments may be devised with multi-programme outcomes.

Delivery of core skills

Whatever the approach to GNVQs, it is desirable that core skills are as closely integrated into the delivery of the vocational studies as is possible.

☞ See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

- Communication skills are a constant in almost any situation.
- Information technology is an increasingly integral part of the way students study and present their work.
- Many aspects of the application of number can be integrated as well.

It is also possible to accredit these skills – and others from the optional core skills units – from other areas of the student's life, such as a schools PSE (personal social education) programme. This helps to give further relevance to such skills, because students see how they permeate other areas of their experience. It is important to organise provision so that students who need extra help in any area are able to get it.

☞ See **Frameworks – Support.**

Monitoring of student progress and achievement

Teachers and lecturers are now more confident about dealing with banks of statements (as in NVQs) and cross-curricular themes (as with the national curriculum in schools). It is essential to use profiling and tracking to maintain clear, appropriate and up-to-date records of student progress. This need not be a difficult process, just an indispensable one.

☞ See *managing programmes* and *quality review* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Organisation and planning

Any teacher involved in delivering an integrated programme needs to address a number of organisational problems, both before and during the programme:

- **Resources.** As the integrated approach quite swiftly involves students in a variety of activities, it means that a rapid succession of resources may also be needed. This requires careful planning. The use of CD-ROM with its ability to provide linked information over a large range of topics at speed is useful here.
- **Outcomes.** Teachers and lecturers need to be sure that they are covering all elements of the programme. This means that the performance criteria, range statements and grading criteria must be given due attention. Therefore, thorough and detailed advance planning is critical, especially if links with other occupational areas are to be exploited.

☞ See *on-course assessment* (in **Frameworks – Assessment**).

- **Core skills and grading.** The teacher must ensure that planning takes these into account to make certain that they are adequately delivered and documented.

☞ See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

Documentation

The teacher will need to solve a number of problems which relate to documentation:

- If students are collaborating on a big, integrated project, some means of recording the contribution of each individual must be devised.
- The scope of the overall project needs to be established in the mind of the verifier.
- The way the project contributes to coverage of the programme needs to be clearly demonstrated.
- Students need to be given an opportunity to document their work within the grading themes of planning and research.
- Methods of clear and accurate record-keeping need to be devised. The teacher needs to know not only what each student is doing, but also how well they are performing.

Example

Twenty-seven students collaborated to produce life-sized figures for the Christmas crib in the abbey. The project offered all kinds of opportunities, but it was not feasible for every student to be involved in every task. Accurate documentation was vital. A combination of techniques was used in order to document this particularly big project:

- Students kept a log of their own particular contribution; the log could be endorsed on a weekly basis by the course tutor.
- The project was thoroughly written up with all the potential tasks clearly explained, so that the verifier could get the overall picture.
- Students wrote up their own contribution.
- The project was accompanied by a 'unit front sheet' showing which units it contributed to.

Learning strategies

It is clear that a wholly integrated strategy requires a very individual and student-centred approach to teaching and learning. This requires considerable investment in the tutorial and action planning aspects of GNVQs, with the aim being to develop confidence, and foster in students a responsibility for their own learning.

The *advantages* of this approach are:

- students can react positively to their ownership of their own learning;
- they can develop at their own pace, to their own level, and follow their own interests;
- it may promote increased independence and maturity.

There are, however, *risks and problems*:

- much depends on student maturity and motivation;
- students may fail to submit work if tutorial support or tracking systems are deficient;
- students may be used to teacher-led approaches and may react against unfamiliar methods;
- there may be considerable resource implications for large amounts of small group teaching.

Wholly integrated strategies are very appropriate for relatively small cohorts of students in, say, a school sixth form or a small college. In very

large FE institutions the advantages of this approach may be lost. However, some degree of integrated assignment work is desirable at some stages in most programmes, and the strength of the tutorial system is an important consideration in enabling students to succeed in these activities.

Integrated approach checklist

- Why do we want an integrated structure?
- How comprehensive does it need to be?
- Do we have systems established to document coverage of the units?
- Do we have systems established to monitor individual students' work within big projects?
- Can we ensure the relevance of all elements of the work?
- Can we cope with a student-centred approach?
- Do we provide sufficient guidance and tutorial support?
- Can we provide the resources?
- Do staff have time for collaboration?
- Are suitable teaching and learning strategies in place?

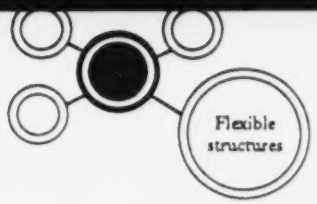
Notes

Audit sheet: Curricular strategies

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topics *curricular strategies, modular approaches* and *integral approaches.*

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Existing provision • What range of other programmes does your institution run? – A levels and GCSEs – NVQs – BTEC National and Higher Diplomas – other vocational – DVE – other • Are any of the existing programmes run on a modular basis? • Is there a common timetable framework across the institution or does each programme have its own timetable? • Can students mix studies from different programmes?		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
• Do students from different programmes work on common projects or assignments? • Do students at different levels of study work on common projects?		
Curriculum support • Are the following aspects of curriculum support established? – initial guidance systems – tutorial systems – formative review and assessment processes – learning support – guidance for progression		



FLEXIBLE STRUCTURES

The unitary structure of GNVQs is intended to give breadth, transferable skills, flexibility and choice:

- Breadth is introduced through the range statements, which define the areas of knowledge or performance in which achievement is expected and ensure that achievement can be demonstrated in a number of contexts.
- Core skills units give transferable skills which are common to all vocational areas.
- Flexibility and choice are introduced by the structure of optional and additional units and by the range of different methods by which GNVQ can be delivered.

Flexible programmes

BTEC (1993a) characterises the flexibility of GNVQs in the following way:

- The qualification is independent of mode of learning and the time taken to achieve the award.
- The qualification is made up of a number of discrete units which are of equal size.
- Credit is awarded for each unit separately and can be certificated.
- Credit may be accumulated for the full award.

The required flexibility can be implemented at three different levels.

1. Flexible delivery of teaching and learning

The GNVQ philosophy stresses that:

- learners are responsible for their own learning;
- learners must provide the evidence of achievement;
- learners are responsible for compiling their portfolio.

All provision made must help to achieve these ends – which means that tutorial activity, including review and action planning, is no less vital than teaching. The aim is to make students independent learners. This

means that they are self-motivated, able to plan the timescale and organisation of their work, and are to undertake different sorts of learning and assessment activity, including:

- teacher-directed learning,
- workshop activity,
- self-directed learning,
- projects,
- assignments.

☞ For further explanations of these methods see *teaching and learning* (in **Frameworks – Learning**) and *tutorial systems* (in **Frameworks – Support**). Account must also be taken of the learning skills development needed to enable students to make the most of flexible delivery. See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**) and *learning support* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

2. Flexible use of resources

The GNVQ programme can be seen as one in which learning is planned between the student and the tutor, and learning opportunities are provided as resources for the student. One resource is tutor-led and classroom-based activity, but other resources may be used. These include:

- Packaged self-study materials, either paper or computer-based.
- Workshops, resource-based learning centres or IT centres where such materials can be accessed and tutorial support is available.
- Assignments that are based in real workplace or community settings and that draw upon the requirements, resources and opportunities of those settings.
- Library, video, multimedia and IT resources that are not specifically written for the student's programme but which relate to it, and which may be accessed through library resource centres.

3. Flexible programme organisation

GNVQs are designed to give flexibility and choice through the structure of optional and additional units. This flexibility can extend to the ways in which GNVQs relate to other areas of the curriculum. For example, how are the opportunities to take GCSE or A level elements in addition to GNVQs structured into students' programmes? This is a two-way traffic. What opportunities exist for A level or NVQ students to achieve certification in core skills through GNVQs, or for A level students to gain credit in GNVQ units as part of their curriculum enhancement? The answer may well depend on whether your institution is seeking to provide flexibility across the whole curriculum, or within GNVQs.

Strategic options for flexible and resource-based learning

There are almost limitless possibilities and combinations of possibilities for flexible learning, from institutions which are attempting to deliver the whole curriculum through flexible learning to those which have identified and met specific needs for flexible delivery.

The options seem to be less about the particular facilities on offer than a rather subtle difference of conception as to what flexible learning is about.

Options list: Flexible learning

1. **Process conceptions of flexible learning**

   These approaches see flexibility as being a part of learning and will tend to classify opportunities by process. This approach lends itself to GNVQs, where the whole curriculum requires flexibility and teaching can be as much concerned with the learning process as with content.

   Advantages

   - This approach is inherently client-centred.
   - It focuses attention on the learning process, and establishes only those facilities and resources required to support that process.

   Disadvantages

   - Strong cross-institutional direction is required if development is to be achieved evenly.
   - Needs good tutorial support (which is also an advantage).

2. **Resource-based conceptions**

   These approaches generally put the establishment of hardware, centres and building adaptations in the forefront of planning in order to change tutor practice by expanding the physical and resource possibilities. Facilities will tend to be characterised by hardware and the centres available:

   - IT centres;
   - library and resource centres;
   - open learning centres.

Advantages

- This approach is proactive.
- It links investment to planned change in the curriculum and its delivery, but funding is currently problematic.

Disadvantages

- Hardware can become an end in itself and the original purposes may lost.
- Very careful attention is required to ensure that changes in teaching patterns allow the best use of resources, and that resources are those most appropriate.

3. **Needs-based conceptions of flexible learning**

Many institutions try to relate process and hardware at a level of practical and fairly short-term decision-making and planning, based on perceived student needs. Pragmatic management is not necessarily inferior to that which is more committed to a view of educational development. If the aims of provision are clear, and are monitored to ensure achievement, then adequate outcomes can be achieved.

Advantage

- Flexibility can be developed incrementally as curriculum change modifies approaches to teaching and learning.

Disadvantage

- The establishment of facilities is often reactive rather than proactive.

NB: For institutions not heavily committed to flexible learning, an audit of the process requirements of GNVQs and of existing facilities (plus those that can be readily adapted) is an adequate starting point in order to establish some basic flexible resources. An audit sheet is provided for this purpose (pp 81–82).

Flexible use of resources checklist

Flexible use of resources will require many of the following criteria to be met.

- Facilities for resource-based learning must be provided (as workshops, flexible learning centres, resource-based learning centres, library and learning centres or IT areas).
- The opportunity to use them should be adequately structured into programmes.
- Facilities must be open when students need to use them.
- Opportunity needs to be managed in order to spread demand to avoid peaks and troughs.
- Tutorial support must be available.
- Adequate working spaces should be provided.
- An appropriate ethos has to be created by:
  - giving students the appropriate skills;
  - preparing assignments adequately;
  - maintaining a working atmosphere in resource centres; and
  - ensuring that students are aware of and can meet assessment standards.
- Flexible and student-centred approaches have to be embedded in all teaching and learning.

Achieving flexible programmes

One of the design criteria of the GNVQ structure is that it can combine elements from different GNVQ subject areas or from NVQs or A levels in a student's programme.

It would appear that many pilot schemes have found that the inherent flexibility of GNVQs poses a certain amount of management difficulty. Where this arises, schemes are likely to offer only a limited range of optional or additional units drawn from outside the particular vocational area, and to limit the opportunity to take A levels, for example, to one provided specifically to the GNVQ group.

Nevertheless, some institutions – both large and small – have been planning for total flexibility in the curriculum ahead of the introduction of GNVQs. The major step that some institutions have achieved is a common

framework for the organisation of all teaching and learning. This includes:

- A common timetable for all full-time courses.
- Teaching carried out within common timeslots, which can be combined to give appropriate time for different activities.
- All full-time courses allocated to banding arrangements, to allow a mix of GNVQ, NVQ, GCSE and A level programmes.
- Cross-programme choice allowed, preferably on the basis of coherent action planning rather than unrestricted choice.

Structural change in institutions

Institutions cannot become more flexible without change. This change is prompted not just by GNVQs – though some effects flow specifically from the scheme – but also from the changes implied by the revision of the whole curriculum. Changes specific to GNVQs include:

- Revised boundaries of particular vocational domains – e.g. 'leisure and recreation' and 'travel and tourism' become 'leisure and tourism'.
- Different levels and approaches are required to become consistent – e.g. courses concerned with RSA office and secretarial provision and BTEC's courses on business and management.
- The emphasis placed on the assessment of outcomes rather than the prescription of content and input.
- The increasing involvement of schools, tertiary and sixth form colleges has introduced different – but equally valid – approaches to curriculum management. Rather than grouping staff around specific courses or programmes, they are often grouped by expertise and work across programmes, which have separate management.
- The increased importance of tutoring and of guidance and learning support as ways of managing learning.

Together with the increased flexibility of teaching and learning, learning resources and the structures of flexibility and choice in programmes (which apply to the whole curriculum), a substantial agenda for adaptation, if not change, can be seen.

Flexibility for students checklist

- Do students receive information and guidance on programme choice?
- Can they easily mix elements of different programmes?
- How do they make coherent choices?
- How do students choose optional and additional units – is it their choice?
- Can they choose across vocational areas where appropriate?
- Are GNVQ elements available to students on other programmes?
- Do teaching methods offer a range of tutor-directed, workshop, and self-directed learning?
- Is self-directed learning supported by flexible learning facilities?
- Are tutoring and support available to provide students with the key learning skills to profit from flexibility?
- Are there timetabling constraints?

Notes

Audit sheet: Flexible structures

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topic *flexible structures.*

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
What resources are available for flexible learning? • Places – flexible learning or learning resource centre(s) – drop-in workshops – areas for self-study • Resources – library of flexible/ open learning materials – packaged resources or self-study materials – IT and multimedia resources • Support – tutorial support for self-study activity – tutorial support for workshops – study support for learning skills		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
• Other	Other resources or support	
How far are the processes of flexible learning embedded in teaching? • A variety of approaches to teaching and learning is used • Supported self-study is programmed • Learning resources are available and used • There is regular tutorial review • Student self-management of learning is developed • Students participate in action planning of the learning programme		
Other aspects that contribute to or detract from flexible delivery in your college or school		

Strategy sheet: Organising the curriculum

Use this sheet to help you clarify your options. It refers to the key issue topics *curricular strategies, modular approaches, integral approaches* and *flexible structures.*

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Approaches to delivery	1. Modular approach 2. Integrated approach	
Modular approaches	1. Modular structure for whole curriculum, including NVQs and A levels 2. Modular strategy for all GNVQ programme 3. Free-standing modular programme	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Integrated approaches	1. Integration between GNVQs and A levels	Degree of integration required
	2. Integration between occupational areas	
	3. Integration between levels within programme	
	4. Integration across units of the programme	
	5. Other required integration	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Integration of other curriculum elements Core skills Tutorial review Guidance Learning support Other – you specify	Refer to appropriate Framework and summarise option or priority	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Flexibility	1. Students have flexible choice of programme 2. Resources and resource bases for independent study 3. Flexible approaches to teaching and learning	What levels of flexibility should you offer?
Your issues		

Action planning sheet: Curricular strategies, modular approaches, integral approaches and flexible structures

This activity sheet is designed to help you respond to the above key issue topics. Complete this sheet if you have responsibility for co-ordinating GNVQ development, or a major aspect of GNVQ provision. You may also wish to use this sheet for team activities.

What aspects of curricular strategies, modular approaches, integral approaches or flexible structures do you feel are most important for you to introduce or improve? (Use a separate sheet if necessary)

e.g. Achieving a flexible curriculum structure

1.

2.

3.

4.

Which of these are in your direct control, and which in other people's?

Yours

If you have control of none of these issues you may have accountability without authority. You may wish to discuss delegation with your manager.

Other staff

If none of the issues is outside your control, you are either a very senior manager or you may be lacking managerial support from college systems. Do you need to discuss this with your manager?

For each issue define

Your aims or desired outcomes *Who can initiate?* • *You* • *Someone else*

1.

2.

3.

4.

For each issue identify

- the people you should consult
- cost, policy and planning implications
- what documentation and consultative information is required
- who is responsible or has the authority for implementation
- what the staff development implications are
- how implementation is to be monitored

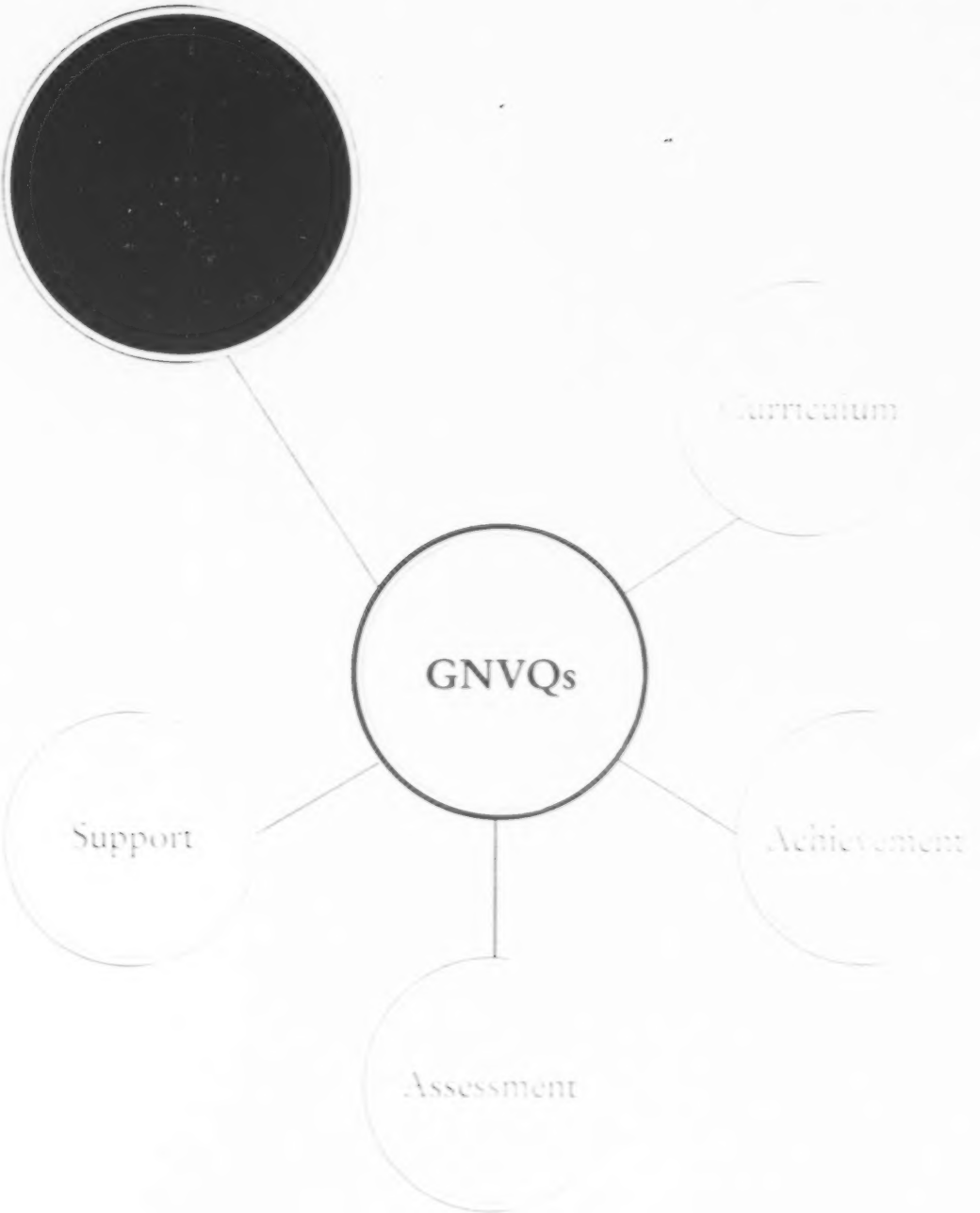
(Use a separate sheet if necessary)

What initial actions are you going to take?

Your comments and issues

Signed **Date**

Frameworks – Learning



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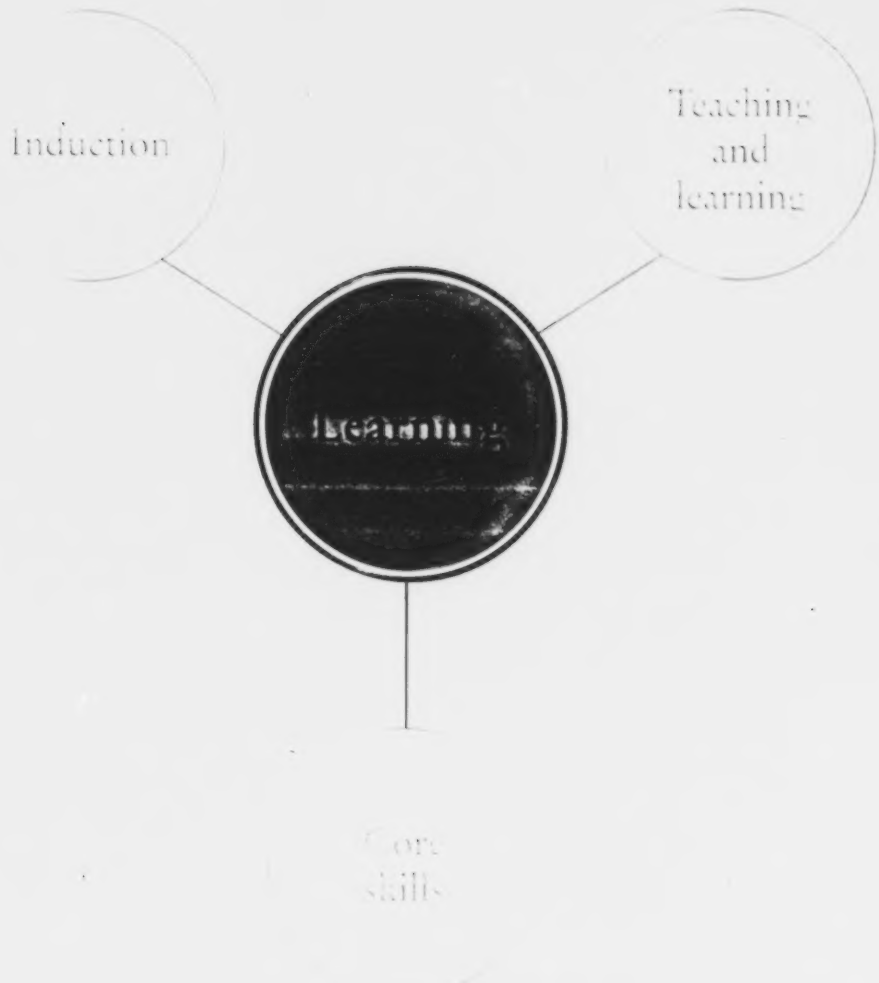

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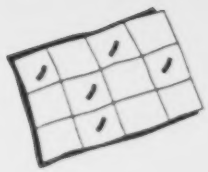

Learning delivery issues

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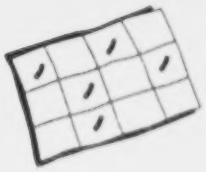


Learning delivery issues

GNVQs are not a soft option second choice to GCSEs and A levels, but a rigorous, vocationally-based alternative which will equally allow students to progress to higher education if they take the required additional units and achieve the appropriate grades. A levels and achievement in Advanced GNVQs should be broadly comparable, and teaching and learning should be directed to this end.

Planning programmes requires a high degree of coherence, particularly in the development of the knowledge base through a well-considered vocational content. Schemes that have treated the assessment framework as a syllabus contents have attracted deserved criticism. It is desirable to produce schemes of work to a consistent pattern, meeting the requirements to:

- demonstrate adequate content for the development of the knowledge base;
- apply appropriate teaching strategies to develop:
  - learning skills,
  - vocational achievement;
- assess achievement to the appropriate standards;
- allow grading to be carried out.

The important matters for the quality of the learning delivered include:

- **Induction**, which can serve many purposes, but provides a first opportunity to demonstrate and establish with students the standards and methods of GNVQs in your institution, to diagnose their learning needs, and to plan their programme.
- Strategies of **teaching and learning**, which include:
  - planning the programme;
  - finding or developing resources, projects, activities and assignments within the requirements of the GNVQ scheme;
  - delivering learning through a variety of methods and activities that develop:
    - underpinning knowledge,
    - understanding,
    - vocationally specific skills,
    - core skills and other key learning skills;
  - managing students' learning through tutorial activities;
  - supporting the development of learning.

- **Core skills**, which are separate units of assessment in the GNVQ framework. The importance of core skills includes their transferability and the contribution they make to the development of learning in the vocational areas. Amongst the issues raised are:
  - strategic choices about delivery;
  - the motivation of students;
  - the relationship between core skills teaching and learning support if it is available;
  - standards and quality.

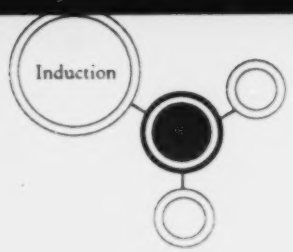
Although the GNVQ system stresses the primacy of assessment and allows a variety of routes and timescales towards the achievement of the award, the quality of teaching and learning underpins the standards that students are enabled to achieve.

As you read through each key issue topic you will find a series of checklists and options lists, and at the end of each topic there are also activity sheets as appropriate. **Audit sheets** allow you to assess where you are now in your delivery of learning; the **Strategy sheet** will allow you to determine your options; and the **Action planning sheet** will help you to develop your response to the issues.

NB: not all types of activity sheet are included with each key issue topic. See below for a matrix of the activity sheets included for learning delivery issues (p92).

Learning delivery – activity sheets included

Key issues	Audit sheet	Strategy sheet	Action planning sheet
Induction	✓		
Teaching and learning	✓	✓	✓
Core skills			



INDUCTION

Induction is a period of peculiar grace within any programme, primed with possibilities. Planned and delivered with conviction, it can be a major vehicle in establishing the tenor of the programme as well as addressing a range of critical issues. It is an opportunity to make students feel welcome and part of the learning group, to build students' confidence, develop their expectations, and plan on clear principles in order to establish the pattern of teaching and learning for the whole programme.

The principles centre on the purposes of induction and the type of student you are trying to 'produce'. Within the spirit of vocational teaching, GNVQs aim to produce a student who is independent, participative, capable of managing their own learning and able to work effectively with others. You may also wish to bring a sense of coherence and relevance to the pupils' whole range of experiences – educational, social, personal.

Induction can:

- **Introduce work patterns**. This may include the range of methods and techniques of teaching and learning that will be used. This can be a two-way process, an opportunity both to demonstrate the quality and variety of teaching, learning and assessment, and to establish the norms of attendance, effort and achievement.
- **Diagnose current levels of skills**, to establish a baseline for student guidance on programme choice and action planning for learning development. This may lead, where appropriate evidence is available, to the accreditation of prior learning.
- **Identify support needs** and introduce students to tutorial guidance and learning support systems. These issues are developed under *initial guidance* (in **Frameworks – Support**) and *initial review* (in **Frameworks – Assessment**).
- **Introduce some sample content**, to give students experience of the intellectual demands of the programme. This will include:
  - vocational study;
  - core skills provision;
  - assignments and assessment.
- **Establish expectations and standards, guidance procedures and action planning**, to help students achieve the required outcomes.
- Break the ice and develop social cohesion in groups.

The induction period can have a number of underpinning purposes:

- **Induction as trainer** – a training period, giving students a necessary grounding in skills, learning styles, etc.
- **Induction as taster** – a mini-version of the characteristic experiences of the full programme.
- **Induction as diagnosis** – a prerequisite to entry to the programme or level.
- **Induction as accreditation** – to carry out APL.
- **A combination of these purposes** – thus induction can be both formative and summative for assessment purposes.

It is important to consider all the possible aspects of induction as complementary parts of a coherent whole. Decisions about the prime purposes of the induction period will affect subsequent choices in a number of areas:

- The establishment of strategies that encourage students to be independent learners.
- The establishment of teaching and learning styles.
- Coverage of essential skills as a prerequisite to embarking on the programme proper.
- The identification of individual strengths and weaknesses (thus induction can shape provision within later stages of the programme).
- Coverage of content drawn from the programme or related to it.
- The establishment of standards.
- The establishment of assessment and monitoring/guidance systems.
- Carrying out assessment of vocational or core skills criteria.

The process of induction should be clear to the student – the aims, activities and outcomes should all have meaning and purpose. Ways in which this might be achieved include:

- provision of an induction pack to help students understand and manage their studies;
- a planned introduction of teaching and learning methods so that their relevance can be understood by the student:
  - individual and group working,
  - tutorial review and planning,
  - tasks and assignments to be completed,
  - assessment and grading to be carried out.
- assembly of an induction portfolio to record achievement.

During induction, students' skills may be identified and developed by:

- assessment of existing skills in relation to vocational areas and core skills;

- assessment and accreditation of prior learning where appropriate;
- front loading core skills provision if appropriate;
- identification of students requiring additional learning support.

The induction process

Build confidence

Induction is a period which can be used to help students develop the confidence and positive self-image required to be independent learners. This may include:

- helping students to integrate and form a cohesive and supportive group and helping them to develop teamwork skills;
- giving positive encouragement, validating existing abilities, encouraging 'no risk' experiment with new demands;
- commencing support for the development of the required learning skills. Few students will have all the necessary skills to be independent and self-confident learners, and the demands of the induction stage may need particular effort to support and develop students' skills.

Audit skills

1. Investigate existing levels of skills, in a number of areas:
   - vocationally specific,
   - core,
   - personal and interpersonal.

   - To generate the necessary input/emphasis for the rest of the programme.
   - May be particularly important in relation to core skills, where coverage can be within occupational areas, but where extra tuition may be necessary to enable students to establish required levels of attainment.

2. Identify the skill levels of individual students:
   - Particularly important in a student-centred system, where there may be less blanket coverage of essential skills, and students with particular weaknesses can slip through the net.
   - Conversely, it can also identify students who excel in certain areas. These students need to be given an opportunity to enhance and document their expertise.
   - Identification of skill levels is a critical part of the required documentation.

3. Instil skills necessary to the completion of the programme:
    - Pre-programme discussion by teaching staff can usefully focus on expected outcomes and isolate the skills that are going to be necessary to deliver those outcomes successfully.
    - In particular, some personal and interpersonal skills are essential tools, which need to be established at the outset.

4. Assess skills in a formal way:
    - In order to establish standards and expectations from the outset.
    - To contribute to the final documentation of core skills, for example.

Introduce content

The content of different occupational areas can demand various types of approach from the students. Art and design, for example, requires a different approach to leisure and tourism. Whatever the type of content and approach, the induction period can:

- introduce the particular content and approach characteristic of the subject (induction as trainer);
- offer an opportunity for students to sample the content of a variety of occupational areas (induction as taster);
- cover an area of content for testing, either as a preliminary for end tests, or as an entry qualification for the rest of the programme (induction as diagnosis);
- establish some basic areas of content, e.g. essential terminology.

Develop expectations

Induction can be a useful period for establishing expectations in a number of areas, particularly if satisfactory completion of the induction process gives entry to the rest of the programme.

1. **Workload**. This is a good time to:
    - establish the work rate, particularly the contribution made by the students' private study time. This will be particularly important in a student-centred, tutorial system;
    - ensure that the induction period accurately mirrors the characteristic demands of the programme;
    - build-in strict deadlines, so that student commitment and efficiency are established;
    - allow scope and offer encouragement to students to enhance their work, beyond the teacher's requirements.

A student-centred system needs to be particularly careful to establish:

- regular working habits;
- good use of private study time;
- acceptance of and respect for deadlines.

2. **Standards.** The establishment of standards for assessment purposes is a critical part of any programme. Induction can:

   - establish the standards in the minds of staff;
   - establish standards in the minds of students.

   Student involvement in the moderation process at the end of the induction period can prove to be a vital factor in:

   - letting some students see the possible standard;
   - sharing good practice, especially in terms of presentation;
   - establishing a respect for the necessity for rigorous standards.

Apply guidance and tutorial procedures

These can be used to:

- monitor student progress;
- offer advice, support, etc.;
- help students make choices of programme or options;
- assist students to become responsible for their own progress;
- induct students into particular teaching and learning styles.

Guidance can be in the hands of the course tutor, or a separate personal or review tutor, who does not deliver the programme but monitors students' personal progress quite closely. It is helpful to have this kind of personnel when there are large numbers of students. Consideration also needs to be given to the careful documentation of students' progress and work.

Induction checklist

- Students made welcome in the group.
- Strategies to develop confidence.
- Introduction of working patterns:
  - methods of teaching and learning;
  - introduction of key learning skills development;
  - norms of attendance, effort and achievement.
- Student guidance:
  - diagnosis of skill levels and support needs;
  - help to students with programme choice;
  - start of tutorial system;
  - introduction of formative review and action planning;
  - giving of APL if appropriate.
- Sample content and activity:
  - vocational studies;
  - core skills;
  - taster project;
  - assignments and assessment;
  - use of packaged and flexible learning materials;
  - use of IT and multimedia resources.
- Information for students:
  - induction handbook;
  - GNVQs information;
  - information about tutorial system, guidance and support services.

Tewkesbury School: A case study

Unlike colleges, which may have well-established vocational induction programmes, many schools will be developing post-16 vocational provision for the first time. This case study is designed to assist schools in particular to address induction. The team at Tewkesbury School developed their approach to induction from a clear mission of what they wanted to achieve.

Our mission statement

All our planning and delivery was shaped within the framework of a clear mission statement, which gave coherence to our strategies. We wanted to encourage our students to be independent learners, capable of managing their learning. We were also keen to establish a high regard for quality of performance. Formulating this kind of policy statement is a prerequisite for building in coherence and keeping track of the overall direction of the programme amid the plethora of day-to-day demands. All members of the team should be aware of the underpinning ethos informing their teaching. The phrase 'what is our ultimate goal?' should have a clear answer in the minds of practitioners.

Our induction programme was planned and delivered within the light of our overall aims. Different teams may give a different emphasis, but there is a range of alternatives that forms a kind of constant – these are considerations that need to be examined by every team, regardless of their ethos.

What did we do?

Students were given an induction booklet, which had to be completed independently by a given deadline as a prerequisite to passing on to the rest of the programme. The mechanism of an induction booklet, which clearly lays out the total package, enabled students to manage themselves and their studies. This freed staff to be available for individual consultation and tuition if necessary.

- We decided to make successful completion an entry requirement, because we wanted to establish the expectation that deadlines were real and important.
- It was important to us that students were capable of working independently, as we felt this to be one of the critical characteristics of the GNVQ ethos.
- We were keen to establish teaching and learning styles – teaching to be tutorial-based, learning to be student-centred.

The induction booklet contained tasks designed to deliver essential skills, some vocationally specific and some general, such as personal and interpersonal skills.

- Vocationally specific tasks were generally set to test the suitability of the students for that particular area.
- They were set to give students a chance to sample a vocational area. Students were able to choose their occupational areas after the induction period (this is very demanding on the timetable).
- Tasks were also set in order to establish or deliver certain skills.
- We also aimed to identify weaknesses, especially in core skills, and these were targeted by provision later in the programme.

- We considered effective personal and interpersonal skills to be important tools for the student, so we tried to introduce and establish a good level of these skills from the outset of the programme.

Students were actively encouraged to pass on their own skills to other students. This was a conscious policy, which was designed to:

- encourage a sense of team work; and,
- more importantly, engender self-confidence. If you can pass on your skills, you are capable and a good communicator.

Once a week, students met with their review tutor who helped them to review progress to date and set immediate targets for the following week. Thus students were encouraged to be self-managing, but were also supported in the development of the necessary maturity.

- We were clear that students needed to be self-managing, but had realistic reservations about the level of maturity that they were likely to possess. We felt it was necessary to have some mechanism to monitor student progress quite closely.
- A tutorial system that combined monitoring with consultation also seemed to offer the potential to help students develop their levels of maturity.

Students were required to complete their induction portfolio to a really good standard. Particular emphasis was placed throughout on high quality, which became a watchword for students and staff alike.

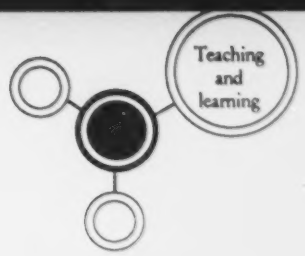
- The establishment of the 'right' standard was an issue of some debate, before and during our first induction period; marking policy was a key instrument in ensuring that standards were high.
- Marking of individual pieces of work took place throughout the induction period. We wanted to grade the whole folder eventually, as this is characteristic of the programme, but felt that students needed to be kept on target in terms of standards during the creation of their portfolio.
- Students would invite staff to mark individual pieces of work on completion, as all pieces within the final folder had to be be marked by the submission date. This was part of our policy, which gave students as much responsibility for the management of their work as possible.
- A simple internal marking system quickly enabled students to identify inadequate work. This proved to be a very important tool for establishing acceptable standards, especially towards the end of the induction period when students were working under pressure to meet the completion date.
- Students quickly became aware of standards and were then involved in moderating the final induction folders, along with staff. We found that they were consistent and rigorous in their judgements. Involving the students in this process set the seal on what we were trying to achieve in the induction period. Students were called upon to be mature and independent in their judgements, and committed to the successful completion of the task.

Audit sheet: Induction

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topic *induction*.

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
What is the current provision for induction? • Duration • Programmes covered • Purposes (see p94) – as trainer – as taster – for diagnosis – for APL		
Are activities aimed at: • Building confidence • Auditing skills		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
• Developing skills • Introducing content and methods • Starting tutorial review • Developing expectations • Introducing guidance and support systems		
What materials are produced to support induction?		



TEACHING AND LEARNING

There are a number of different levels at which the issues of teaching and learning can be discussed.

Organisational

- The strategic organisation of the curriculum in relation to elements and units of achievement, which gives rise to modular or integrated approaches to provision.
- The planning of the programme within the strategic options developed, particularly the construction and planning of learning phases.

Educational

- Ensuring that the planning takes account of all aspects of content – in relation to knowledge and process skills – required for the occupational area.
- Writing and developing resources, projects, activities and assignments within the requirements of the occupational area, and in order to meet the needs of the students.

Methodological

- Providing a range of learning opportunities and a variety of methods and activities to develop students' learning.
- Managing students' learning and developing students' ability to manage their own learning through tutorial and guidance arrangements.
- Developing learning skills via core skills teaching and learning support arrangements.

All of these issues pertain to the development of:

- underpinning knowledge;
- the ability to demonstrate understanding;
- process skills specific to the area of study;
- key learning skills (general process skills) including:
  - transferable core skills,
  - skills required to meet grading criteria.

Organisational issues – planning the programme

The overall issues of curriculum strategy are discussed under *modular approaches* and *integral approaches* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**). There are a number of related issues for the organisation of teaching and learning which will apply irrespective of the strategy adopted.

- The concept of a learning phase is central. This is a grouping of learning activities covering a coherent group of elements within a unit, or across units. A learning phase brings together:
  - different learning activities, from tutor-directed to student self-study;
  - teaching that develops knowledge and understanding of the vocational area, performance skills and key learning skills.
- A learning phase may be a topic with a sequence of activities, or a project, and will have its own specific content and coherence, which will fulfil more than just the requirements of the GNVQ statement of achievement.
- The learning phases will constitute the knowledge specification for the students' programme. The units of assessment do not in themselves constitute a syllabus, and must not be treated as such because they define outcomes, not delivered content. It is desirable, therefore, to develop a scheme of work which clearly establishes the content and delivery methods, and relates these to assessment and outcomes.
- The GNVQ structure is concerned ultimately with outcomes, and admits that students may reach the outcomes by different routes.
- It is in developing and planning routes that the distinctive educational contribution is made by the providing institutions.

☞ See *curricular strategies* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**).

Educational issues

The key aspect that planning has to meet is the requirement in GNVQs for elements of achievement that specify the detailed skills, knowledge and understanding which underpin performance. BTEC describes the requirements in the following way:

> Elements must:
> - be described in terms of outcomes to be achieved;
> - be capable of demonstration and assessment.
>
> Each element has:
> - a number of performance criteria defining successful performance;
> - a range statement;
> - evidence indicators for vocational units.
>
> (BTEC 1993a)

Performance criteria contain evaluative statements, which define the process that must be observed to achieve the outcome and which set acceptable levels of performance.

Range statements specify the areas of knowledge and performance to which the element applies and define what a student needs to understand to demonstrate achievement.

Evidence indicators suggest suitable forms of evidence and indicate what is required to demonstrate achievement adequately.

This system is complex. One approach may be to work through a number of examples within a development group, referring to publications by the validating bodies (BTEC (1993a) **Implementing BTEC GNVQs – a guide for centres**; RSA (1994) **GNVQ centre guidelines**; CGLI (1993) **The GNVQ handbook**). Consultation with a verifier may also be helpful.

- Institutions may wish to appoint an internal or external consultant (briefed on development) to work with teams.
- Within the broad parameters established by the different validating bodies, there is still considerable opportunity and flexibility for institutions to develop programmes that have a distinctive character (to meet the needs of particular local employers or commercial and industrial requirements, for instance).
- This character will be derived within the planning, through the content of the particular projects or assignments that are developed, and by the choice of optional and additional units available.
- Institutions may find it useful to produce a scheme of work for each part of the programme.

Schemes of work

Schemes of work are one way of turning the complexity of GNVQs into a coherent approach to teaching and learning. Schemes will differ depending on whether modular or integrated approaches to the organisation of learning phases are adopted.

- The modular approach to provision lends itself to an assessment pattern that integrates elements of achievement within a unit and accumulates units of achievement.
- The integrated approach lends itself to an assessment pattern which integrates elements across units and thus accumulates elements of achievement.

☞ See *curricular strategies* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**).

Schemes of work will define:

1. The knowledge required;
2. The performance skills that must be demonstrated;
3. The activities and assignments that will be undertaken;

4. The approaches to teaching and learning that will be adopted (see 'Methods of teaching and learning', p108);
5. The learning skills that will be developed by the integration of core skills and the application of grading criteria.

Aspects 1 and 2 will be based upon the performance criteria and range statements for units. It is essential that the scheme gives coherent and appropriate coverage of the occupational area. Appropriate coverage is related to level, and is wider than merely meeting the performance requirements of the assessment framework. Aspects 3–5 are largely determined by the performance criteria and evidence indicators for both the occupational units and core skills, and by the grading criteria.

Schemes of work checklist

A typical scheme of work will define:

- Topic area or project (according to approach).
- Aims, expressed as the development of:
  - the knowledge base;
  - performance skills for the occupational area;
  - learning skills related to core skills and grading themes.
- Learning activities to meet these aims, including:
  - a wide variety of activities;
  - work enabling students to develop a range of learning skills and learning styles;
  - topic and project work;
  - adequate opportunity for group, individual and independent (resource-based) work.
- Methods adopted for each activity, which consciously contribute to:
  - performance skills development;
  - learning skills development.
- Assignments to be assessed – outcomes should relate closely to aims.

Assignments

Much will depend on the quality of assignments. This is a large topic which is the subject of a companion Learning Partners book (Searle (1994) **Developing assignments for GNVQ – a guide for writers and assessors**). The following checklist will help identify the issues to be addressed.

Issues for assignments checklist

- The structure of assignments:
  - level of ability,
  - requirements for evidence,
  - range and contexts,
  - opportunities for students to plan and achieve,
  - mapping performance criteria,
  - mapping core skills,
  - mapping grading criteria.

- Writing and presentation:
  - readability,
  - clarity of presentation,
  - presenting information,
  - graphical presentation.

- Developing activities:
  - using real examples,
  - developing resource packs,
  - using resources flexibly, including IT and multimedia,
  - using materials for individual and group work.

- Integrating and mixing:
  - integrating units,
  - mixing levels (if appropriate),
  - mapping performance criteria,
  - mapping core skills and grading criteria.

- Supporting activities and assignments:
  - student guides,
  - tutor guides,
  - resource packs and their use,
  - helping students to meet their writing and presentational requirements,
  - learning support.

- Assessing achievement:
  - ensuring coverage of the requirements,
  - ensuring evidence is collected and presented in the portfolio,
  - identifying and revising areas of weaknesses,
  - checking standards,
  - using quality assurance systems,
  - the assessor's role.

Methods of teaching and learning

The GNVQ scheme envisages a mix of learning experiences, including those which are:

- teacher-directed;
- workshop-based;
- self-directed – may involve flexible learning; and
- involve work experience.

BTEC suggests a classification of learning activities which is the basis for the following list.

- **Activities that develop learning.** A wide range of activities is seen as contributing to the development of learning. These activities include:
  - induction;
  - learning activities:
    - visits,
    - group discussions,
    - projects,
    - exhibitions,
    - presentations;
  - teacher inputs through timetabled classes:
    - lectures,
    - tutorials,
    - seminars;
  - skills workshops;
  - laboratory work;
  - open and flexible learning – using specific resource banks and general resources;
  - work experience and work shadowing.
- **Activities that manage and support learning.** Other activities support students' learning and help them manage it:
  - guidance and counselling;
  - tutorial support;
  - individual and group learning support;
  - formative review and recording – action planning.

(Developed from **Implementing GNVQs – a guide for centres** (BTEC 1993a). See also guidance by RSA (1994) **GNVQ centre guidelines** and CGLI (1993) **The GNVQ handbook**).

This list shows two essential attributes, namely that:

1. A twin approach is adopted between those activities that primarily develop learning, and those that manage and support learning. The management and support of learning is discussed in more detail in ☞ *tutorial systems* and *learning support* (in **Frameworks – Support**). It is important to note here that the tutorial aspects are integral, essential elements of the programme, and are indeed one of the mechanisms through which the coherence of what is taught may be achieved.

2. GNVQ teaching is made up of a wide variety of methods, situations and activities.

   The wide range of demands made upon tutors provides an opportunity for them to refresh their approaches to teaching. This is discussed in ☞ *staff support* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

In any activity there are three levels at which students' achievements will be developed.

- Knowledge and understanding of the subject or issue, which is the factual content of the activity.
- Process skills in relation to the vocational aspects of the programme – occupationally specific competences, for instance.
- Key learning skills, through core skills elements and by meeting grading criteria.

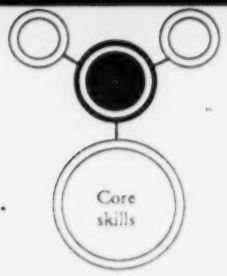
For example, a retailing unit may require students to find out about and understand the essentials of consumer law, to develop interpersonal skills which might be applied in customer relations, and to improve core skills elements of communication and information technology.

In using a variety of methods, fitness for purpose is paramount and each teaching approach can be considered for its contribution.

- A short lecture is a very good way of outlining and organising the structure of information on an issue but is rarely effective beyond 10–20 minutes (according to the students' level of study).
- Detailed information retrieval can best be conducted from paper or multimedia resources, and might be managed most efficiently by organised self-study.
- Understanding can be developed through structured, tutor-led questioning, or discussion based on a stimulus response resource, or a structured group activity.
- Application can be developed by simulations or live projects.

Teaching thus becomes a very self-conscious activity, which goes beyond the slogans of teacher-directed or student-centred learning to meet the variety of student need with a well-managed variety of taught responses. The different methods become best employed if they are embedded into, and flows naturally from, project and assignment work. Tutor question

and answer work can be used to establish issues and criteria, which can be put on a flip chart for subsequent small group discussion on decisions that need to be made – all within the context of a project (let us say mounting an exhibition on the tourist potential of the local area). In this way students can be given a stimulating, varied and coherent experience.



CORE SKILLS

The structure of core skills

Core skills are one of the innovative aspects of GNVQs which is providing some challenges to colleges and schools. The basic structure and approach is simple. There are three mandatory core skills units:

- communication;
- application of number;
- information technology.

All GNVQs must incorporate these, and students must achieve core skills units at the same level or higher than their occupational units.

Two additional units are available:

- personal skills – working with others;
- personal skills – improving learning and performance.

One further – unaccredited – unit is available:

- problem-solving.

It is intended that the assessment of core skills should be mapped across the curriculum, so that skills can be assessed as a part of unit assignments. Core skills units are not graded at merit or distinction level, but students may achieve core skills certification at a level above their occupational study.

Strategies for delivering core skills

Three basic strategies are available:

- **Integral delivery** involves core skills teaching as an essential part of vocational teaching and inseparable from it. Core skills are delivered by vocational tutors rather than by specialist core skills tutors.
- **Additional delivery** involves a distinct core skills programme, which is taught separately by specialist staff.
- **Core skills workshops**, which might be used to supplement integral teaching.

However core skills are delivered, the following should be considered:

- Core skills must be taught – they are unlikely to be just 'picked up'.
- Skills must be taught in such a way that they are transferable.
- The core skills assessment units do not constitute a separate core skills syllabus. Core skills must be assessed in a vocational context to achieve evidence that the appropriate range has been fulfilled.
- Core skills units may therefore be mapped across the occupational units, and assessed in vocational assignment work.
- Core skills can also be evidenced from other experiences, e.g. work experience, trips and residential courses.

Together these factors create a very strong presumption towards integral delivery, by:

- including clearly identified core skills activities in all projects, group work and assignment work;
- working to a clear plan for core skills, giving a coherent sequence of skills development;
- introducing short episodes of teaching that identify core skills requirements and help students to acquire skills within the vocational modules;
- making sure that students can practise and develop the core skills required in each piece of assessed work.

Some pilot GNVQs have found that not all core skills can be delivered integrally with equal ease. Some elements of discrete teaching have proved to be necessary. This might be achieved by the following:

- Use of supported student self-study through open learning centres or workshops.
- Specific short courses to cover the basic requirements of communications, IT or number.
- Irregular additional sessions to introduce new skills where these are required (e.g. a short session to cover the use of spreadsheets or databases, some relevant statistical techniques, and reports and presentations using computer data as a prelude to an assignment with a strong data handling and presentation component).
- Use of learning support facilities.

However, the major criticism of core skills delivery made by both OFSTED and the FEFC Inspectorate is that they are insufficiently integrated into vocational teaching and assessment. OFSTED found that 'the standards of work in lessons designed to cover the skills in isolation from the vocational units ... were barely satisfactory' (OFSTED 1994).

It is apparent that core skills units differ in:

- the best ways that skills can be taught and acquired;

- the degree to which they can be integrated into occupational studies;
- the ways that they can be demonstrated and assessed.

The occupational areas also differ in the degree to which core skills can be incorporated. Whilst in some areas number or IT lend themselves easily to incorporation into assignments, in others they may have to be observed in use.

It is important to ensure that integration is achieved as far as is possible, and this will require both staff development and some specialist support. It is likely that strategies to provide all students with some additional teaching and some students with additional support will be required.

There are, therefore, no tidy answers. An effective programme is likely to use several of the available strategies, for example:

- Integral delivery in vocational teaching, which may include both explicit and implicit core skills teaching and which will lead to explicit assessment.
- Core skills support packs for the units, which may include self-study materials or examples and guides.
- Some opportunity to develop skills in discrete sessions, which might be:
  - part of induction,
  - an introductory short course,
  - a core skills workshop,
  - pre-assignment skills briefings.

The appropriate strategy will depend upon your own particular situation and an audit sheet is provided to help you analyse this (see p119). The strategy will depend upon:

- the GNVQ units being studied;
- the particular core skills and how well they integrate;
- the needs of the group of learners – some may need more support than others;
- individual learner needs (which might dictate some additional learning support).

Issues for core skills teaching

There are a number of issues and problems that have to be resolved for core skills teaching. These relate to:

- student understanding and motivation;
- curriculum and teaching;
- standards and quality.

Student understanding and motivation

Understanding the language of core skills. The language in which the performance criteria are described is obscure even to tutors and sometimes seems to make little obvious discrimination between skills at different levels.

A number of schemes have provided translations and examples to help students' understanding. These have not been as successful as intended, since students still have to claim their competence in the language of the performance criteria. NCVQ is also keen that students should learn the language of core skills and has produced guidance to assist tutors and students (**Assessing core skills in GNVQs**, NCVQ 1994). The best way of achieving understanding is by demonstration to students, rather than by more words. Induction provides a good opportunity for this. See ☞ *induction* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

The performance criteria for core skills would still benefit from 'jargon busting' and perhaps some consideration of other, established approaches. Alternative types of profile are frequently used on adult access courses. Until some development of this sort occurs it is likely that students – and staff – will find difficulty with the language of core skills.

Early in 1995 new specifications for core skills are being issued, with the requirement to be clearer and more precise.

Understanding the process. It is essential that students are self conscious about the skills they are using. An understanding of the skills being acquired is essential for claiming core skills competence. Only if students are self-aware about their skills will they be able to demonstrate transferability in assessment. The awareness must extend not only to the identification of a skill, but a knowledge of how it can be applied in context. This is something that does not necessarily come naturally, and therefore it must be taught.

Student motivation. Students may not see core skills as being important. They do not contribute directly to merit or distinction grades and the process of claiming skills may be seen as complex.

A number of strategies can be used to raise students' motivation, but all rely on vocational tutors reinforcing the message that core skills are essential for good performance on the programme and that they facilitate progression. Some factors that help this are:

- frequent reference to appropriate core skills in all vocational teaching;
- a planned and cumulative development of skills across the curriculum;
- a strong stress on areas of application which are intrinsically interesting. Building some element of fun into learning does no harm.

It may be wrong to assume that only the simplest and most direct vocational applications are appropriate with many groups of students, or that some students – because of their occupational interest – will therefore be uninterested in particular core skills areas.

Issues for curriculum and teaching

Many GNVQ tutors find that core skills teaching imposes a complex, additional set of demands upon their teaching. Tutors find that they are required to:

- be explicit about the core skills demands of their teaching and assignments;
- contribute to the teaching and development of core skills;
- co-ordinate this development with other teachers;
- constantly reinforce the core skills message;
- ensure students claim their core skills competence;
- record the progress and development of individual students.

There is a danger that the difficulties of core skills delivery, allied to the fact that teaching should be in the hands of vocational tutors, may mean that some tutors will see core skills as marginal to the main endeavour. We may need to remind ourselves that:

- many employers will be looking primarily at the transferable skills elements of GNVQs;
- HE admissions tutors will generally want clear evidence of study skills development, equivalent to that assumed from A levels, before they feel confident about HE entry for GNVQ students.

Managing core skills demands a detailed plan of when the requirements are delivered and assessed. This should relate closely to the actual demands of assignments and should in turn influence the skills demands embedded in assignments in order to create an incremental approach to core skills development.

One problem with modular schemes which have short modules is that there is a very steep demand curve for core skills if students are to use their skills to attain merit and distinction grades in the early modules. An orderly and long-term approach to core skills development may not be practicable. The co-ordination of core skills in modular schemes with short modules can be more difficult than for other approaches.

Strategies that are used to develop a positive approach to core skills include:

- An introduction to core skills during induction, which:
  - explains competence clearly;
  - makes the procedures for claiming core skills clear and the necessity obvious;
  - clarifies the integrated assignment approach.

- A clear plan for core skills development through the programme, with explicit reference to which core skills areas may be addressed in assignments. This plan is made available to students.
- A prescriptive approach to claiming: 'in this assignment you will have the opportunity to demonstrate core skills competence in the following areas', and a reminder: 'have you achieved your core skills competence in ..... and claimed your core skills accreditation?'
- Opportunities for claiming core skills from the first assignment to the last, with more opportunities to claim each skill than the required minimum.
- Opportunities for some students to gain core skills units at higher levels – possibly through additional provision or by learning support.
- Opportunities for students with difficulties to receive learning support to develop their core skills.
- ☞ Effective systems of record-keeping. See *managing programmes* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Standards and quality

It is a requirement that core skills should be assessed with the same rigour and to the same quality standards as other GNVQ units at that level. One of the advantages of team approaches to the integral delivery of core skills is that it promotes shared and common standards.

To ensure quality, many pilot schemes have adopted a core skills co-ordinator for the GNVQ programme, or in larger institutions for each vocational area. Typically, their job is to ensure that quality standards are achieved. For example, to make sure that:

- Core skills are properly mapped across the curriculum.
- There is a planned approach to teaching and assessment which is consistently applied.
- There is an incremental development of core skills through the programme.
- Good record-keeping systems are maintained so that all tutors can see each student's progress.
- Additional provision is arranged where further help is required.
- Students have access to learning support provision where necessary.
- Assessment is conducted to consistent standards.

Core skills checklist

- Do students understand the core skills structure:
  - is the jargon explained?
  - is there a clear map of skills development through the programme?
  - are assessment procedures made clear?
- Are core skills taught as an integral part of occupational teaching throughout the programme:
  - have effective strategies for this teaching been developed?
  - are they applied by all staff?
  - is teaching co-ordinated across the programme?
- Is the development of skills reinforced by tutors:
  - underlining the importance and relevance of core skills?
  - teaching the skills where development is required?
  - explaining the skills demands of assessment?
  - offering prescriptive help and guidance to encourage students to claim?
- Are skills developed in such a way that students:
  - are aware of their skills and skills development needs?
  - can apply their skills to their vocational work?
  - can transfer their skills to other areas of application?
- Is there a team approach to core skills development, assessment and recording:
  - is the organisation, teaching and assessment of core skills a standing item on the agendas of team meetings?

Audit sheet: Delivering learning

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topics *teaching and learning* and *core skills.*

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Teaching and learning		
• Are schemes of work developed to implement the GNVQ framework?		
• What range of activities is used to develop learning? (see p108)	Write in activities	
• What structures are available to support learning? – guidance – tutorial – review – learning support	See also **Frameworks – Support**	

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Core skills • Is integration being achieved with vocational teaching: – in developing skills? – in setting assignments? – in assessing core skills? • What resources are available to support core skills development: – learning support system? – skills workshops? – IT centres/resources? – learning resource centre? – basic education provision? • How much of core skills is delivered through the vocational programme? • What additional support is required?		
Your issues		

Strategy sheet: Delivering learning

Use this sheet to help you clarify your options. It refers to the key issue topics *induction, teaching and learning* and *core skills.*

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Induction		
What is the primary purpose of induction?	1. To assess, guide and filter students' entry to programmes	
	2. To introduce students to the content and methods of the programme and to establish expectations	
	3. To develop students' confidence and to begin the process of skills development	
	4. A balanced mixture of these purposes	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Teaching and learning Which aspects of current delivery require development to meet the GNVQ programme requirements?	1. Clear, standardised schemes of work are produced	What actions are required for each of these?
	2. A full range of teaching approaches and methods is used	
	3. Methods and facilities for students' supported self-study	
	4. Refreshment of teaching skills for the programme	
	5. Your priorities	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Core skills		
Which delivery option is most achievable in your circumstances?	1. Core skills development wholly through vocational choice	
	2. Some integration with additional provision for particular skills areas	
What strategies are being used to motivate students and build understanding of core skills?	1. Supporting documentation is produced	
	2. There is a clear, planned and cumulative development of skills	
	3. Vocational teachers are explicit about core skills requirements and take full responsibility for development	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
	4. A prescriptive approach to claiming is used	
	5. Learning support is available to individual students	
	6. Accreditation at a higher level is available if appropriate	
Your issues		

Action planning sheet: Delivering learning

This activity sheet is designed to help you respond to the key issue topics *induction, teaching and learning* and *core skills*. Complete this sheet if you have responsibility for co-ordinating GNVQ development, or a major aspect of GNVQ provision. You may also wish to use this sheet for team activities.

What aspects of induction, teaching and learning or core skills do you feel are most important for you to introduce or improve? (Use a separate sheet if necessary)

e.g. Delivery of core skills through vocational teaching and assignments.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Which of these are in your direct control, and which in other people's?

Yours

If you have control of none of these issues you may have accountability without authority. You may wish to discuss delegation with your manager.

Other staff

If none of the issues is outside your control, you are either a very senior manager or you may be lacking managerial support from college systems. Do you need to discuss this with your manager?

For each issue define

Your aims or desired outcomes *Who can initiate?* • *You* • *Someone else*

1.

2.

3.

4.

For each issue identify

- the people you should consult
- cost, policy and planning implications
- what documentation and consultative information is required
- who is responsible or has the authority for implementation
- what the staff development implications are
- how implementation is to be monitored

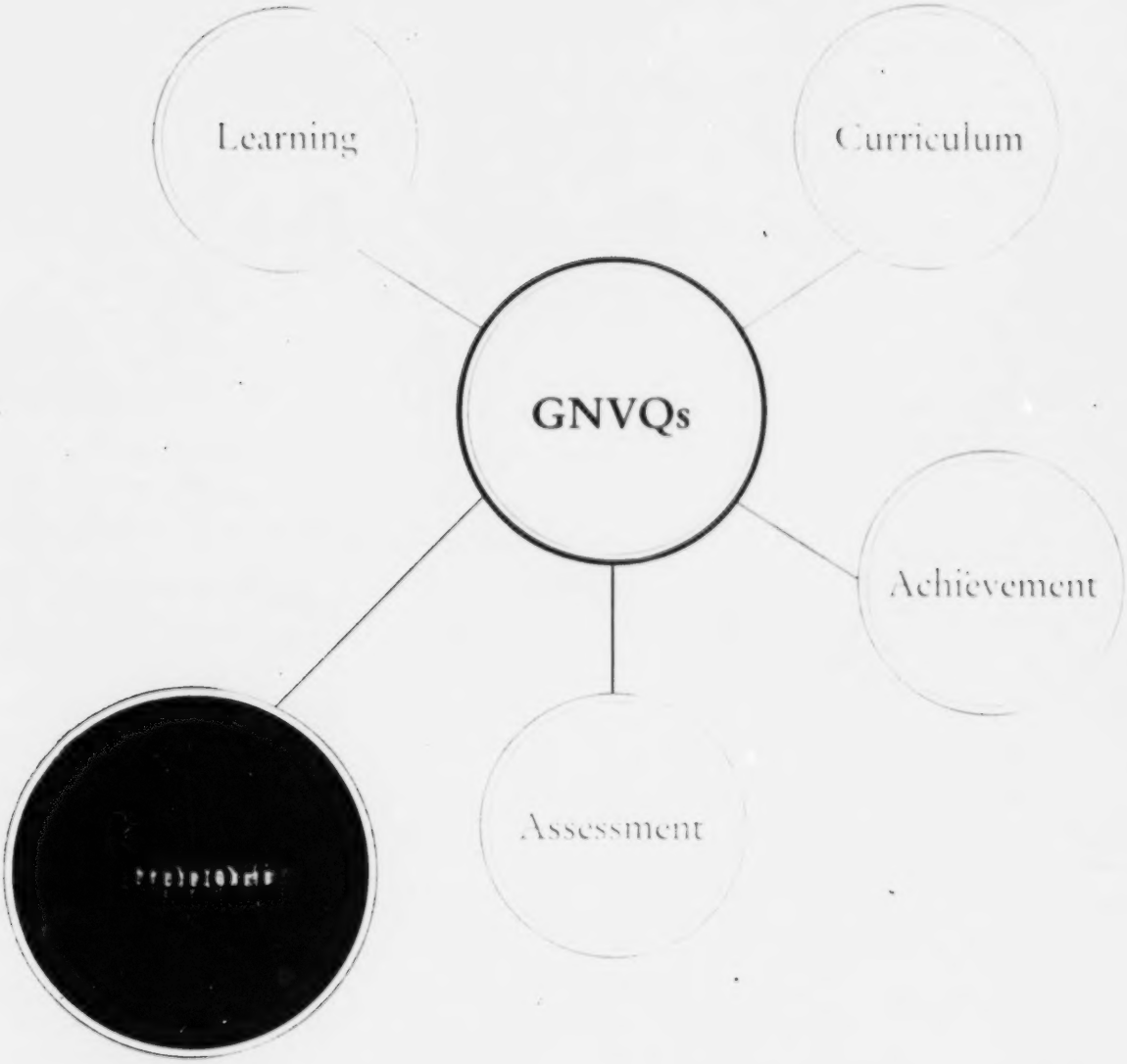
(Use a separate sheet if necessary)

What initial actions are you going to take?

Your comments and issues

Signed **Date**

Frameworks – Support



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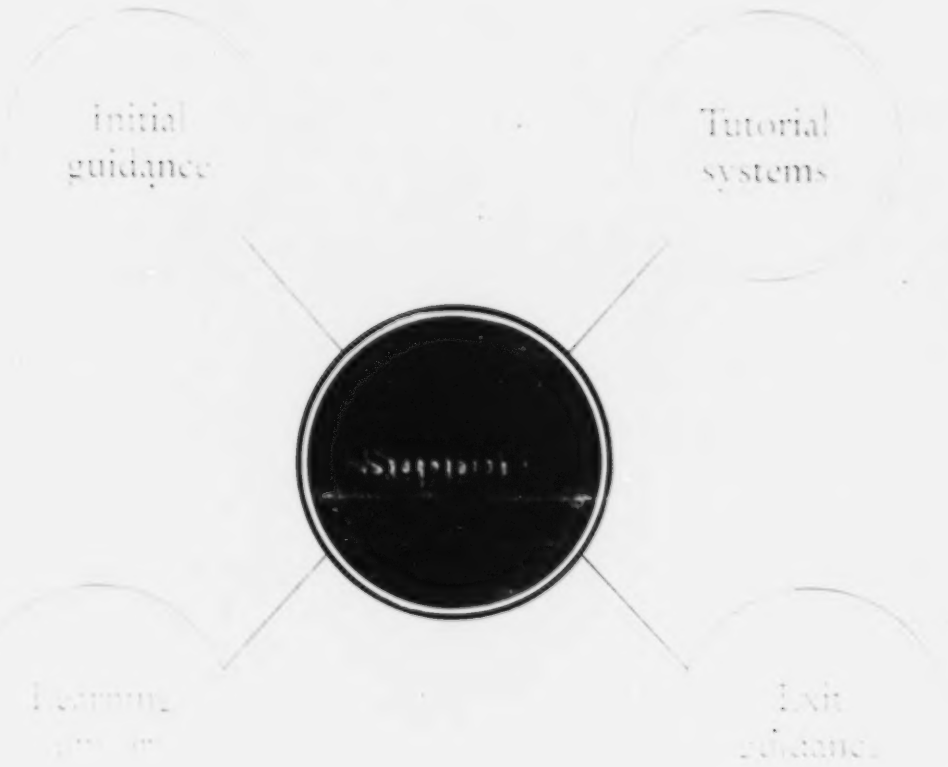

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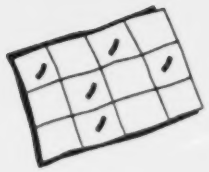

Learner support issues

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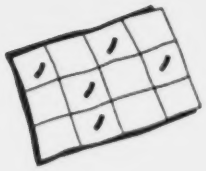


Learner support issues

What is guidance and support?

GNVQs place the learner at the centre of the educational process. Learners also have more responsibility to manage their own learning than with some of the precursors to GNVQs. The responsibility is not solely the student's; it is shared between the student and the institution. The institution may discharge its responsibility to develop responsible and autonomous learners in a number of ways. Elements of guidance and support are likely to be central to any strategy.

In GNVQs, guidance and support processes are closely related to the process of action planning, which is the focus of negotiation of students' learning. Guidance and support run throughout a student's time in an institution, and may conventionally be discussed in three phases – at entry, on-programme and at exit.

Guidance and support at entry

Entry and pre-entry guidance is concerned to give students appropriate information and to help them to make realistic choices. This may include:

- Information on available programmes of study and the options and choices within them.
- Help with the choice of appropriate programmes and levels of study in relation to a student's interests, experience, prior attainment, learning styles, ambitions and preferred destination.
- Diagnostic activities to establish interests, aptitudes and learning needs where these are not otherwise apparent.
- Opportunities for accrediting prior learning.
- Opportunities for tasting or sampling provision.

Entry guidance may include specific diagnostic elements, designed to identify learning support needs for individual students and to establish aggregate demand for learning support provision.

Guidance and support on-programme

Guidance and support through the programme are concerned with the development of students' learning. This may include:

- Checking that the appropriate choices of study have been made, and referring to other provision if appropriate.
- Monitoring and review of students' progress and achievement.
- Providing help with the development of students' learning skills.
- Identifying and meeting learning support needs.
- Providing guidance for students planning their learning.

Guidance and support through the programme require some form of continuing tutorial relationship with the student. The next publication in the *Frameworks for managing learning* series – **Tutoring for achievement** – will deal extensively with tutoring and action planning.

Learning support will generally need some specific attention. Many of the necessary learning skills (defined by core skills and grading criteria) will be addressed through core skills provision. For some students there will be a need to develop their learning skills through additional learning support provision. How this can be approached will be discussed later in this Framework section (see p149). The previous publication in the *Frameworks for managing learning* series – **Supporting learning** – deals extensively with the development of learning support.

Guidance at exit

Most schools and colleges now attempt to address guidance for progression in a systematic way. Exit guidance is in part reflective – in that it reviews and evaluates achievements (and will often summarise these in a record of achievement) – and part projective, concerned with enabling students to make realistic choices about their future. Exit guidance is not just limited to the end of the programme, but should be running throughout.

Guidance for progression involves:

- Tutorial review and guidance on levels of achievement.
- Careers information and guidance on vocational choices or directions.
- Educational guidance on further education or training.

Furthermore, students may require support to enable them to present themselves and their skills in the best form for prospective employers or other educational institutions.

As you read through each key issue topic you will find a series of checklists and options lists and at the end of the topics there are also activity sheets as appropriate. The **Audit sheet** will allow you to assess where you are now in your management of guidance and support; the **Strategy sheet** will help you to clarify and evaluate your options; and the **Action planning sheet** will help you to develop your response to the issues.

NB: not all types of activity sheet are included with each key issue topic. The matrix below shows the activity sheets included for learner support issues.

Learner support – activity sheets included

Key issues	Audit sheet	Strategy sheet	Action planning sheet
Initial guidance Tutorial systems Learning support Exit guidance	✓	✓	✓

INITIAL GUIDANCE

One goal for post-16 education is to enable people to succeed – i.e. to attain qualifications, progress to work or higher levels of education, and to achieve self-development. It is important that people make the choices that give them the best chance of success. Guidance is concerned with helping people to make these choices. The range of choice and the factors to be taken into account are numerous. They include:

- Available programmes of study – GNVQs, NVQs, A levels, OCN-accredited adult education.
- The options and choices within a programme, e.g. subject choices, occupational choices.
- The way such programmes are delivered by different institutions or providers.
- The demands that courses and programmes make upon learning initially, and at the end of the period of study or training.

Guidance also helps institutions to ensure that they retain students. The FEFC Inspectorate has noted that in some colleges providing GNVQs 'poor pre-enrolment guidance has resulted in students being placed on inappropriate courses, which in turn has contributed to high drop-out rates' (FEFC Inspectorate 1994).

Guidance can help by focusing students on the factors involved in the choices they have to make:

- their interests and goals;
- their attainment;
- their experience (where applicable);
- their preferred learning styles;
- their intended destination;
- other practical factors which may have a strong influence on choices:
  - study costs and financial support,
  - transport costs,
  - availability and cost of childcare,
  - attendance times and requirements,
  - available modes of study.

With new and complicated schemes like GNVQs, it is important that all staff involved in the guidance process have a good understanding of the programmes. Clear and simple briefing documents on the programmes on offer, what they contain, how they are organised and how they are assessed will help both students and guidance tutors. A student may quickly be helped to set realistic and relevant goals. Sometimes, however, the factors are not self-evident to the student. In these circumstances:

- counselling may be used to help students to become more aware of their attainments, skills, interests and needs, and to develop appropriate expectations for themselves.
- diagnostic assessment may be used at this stage to identify aptitude and competence, and learning needs. This may be achieved through structured interviewing, computer-based or other self-assessment materials, or diagnostic testing.

Which systems are appropriate will depend on the guidance systems that are established and your strategies on initial assessment.

Guidance, diagnosis and learning support

One aim of guidance is to enable students to enter education at a level at which they can progress. Learning support helps to broaden the band of student choice by helping students to bridge the gap between prior attainment and the demands of a programme of study.

Pre-entry guidance can help students to make realistic choices of courses, allowing them to be ambitious – i.e. to choose levels and programmes that challenge their potential – without entering programmes of study where the learning gap is so substantial that they will inevitably drop out or fail.

Learning gaps can be manageable or unmanageable. A manageable gap is one where the combination of skills requirements across the range of skills can be bridged. The key learning skills areas are:

- literacy,
- numeracy,
- language,
- study skills,
- IT.

For example, an overseas student with only initial language skills but otherwise good learning skills may face a bridgeable gap, whereas one whose study skills are poor may find the gap unmanageable.

The width of the gap is defined both by course demands and the students' pre-existing skills. To undertake guidance effectively, those carrying it out will require certain information on:

- the key skills demands of courses;
- students' prior skills attainment (or it will need to be obtained from some form of diagnostic assessment);
- the availability of learning support.

Guidance may be the precursor to support, where students need to develop their learning skills to undertake an appropriate programme. Entry support functions may be conducted by:

- specialist learning support tutors, with a responsibility for developing learning skills across an institution, irrespective of level or programme. They may also be involved in diagnostic testing;
- other specialists (generally in basic skills, e.g. adult basic education tutors or special needs staff);
- tutors with defined personal tutorial roles, which include the identification of learning needs and the development of learning skills.

☞ See *learning support* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Guidance systems

Guidance is necessarily neutral and impartial; it is a technique to enable students to make fully informed choices for themselves. In many respects, however, it puts into practice customer-oriented marketing. Guidance systems often also provide elements of diagnosis and are sometimes a part of assessment and admissions units. Like learning support, guidance systems work both at the individual and the collective level. At the collective level, the concerns of guidance intersect with those of needs analysis – i.e. to identify the needs of potential learners in the community, and to develop a curriculum to meet those needs. This function is generally discharged through feedback to institutions and through advocacy.

In its publication **The challenge of change** (1986), the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) defined seven core activities of educational guidance:

- informing,
- advising,
- counselling,
- assessing,
- enabling,
- advocating,
- feeding back.

Guidance – good practice objectives checklist

- Is guidance client centred – are student needs placed above those of the institution?
- Is guidance confidential – is liaison and referral conducted with students' agreement?
- Is the service open to all – school leavers, adult returners, overseas students?
- Is the service accessible to all, including part-time students, those with mobility difficulties, and those in work?
- Is the service free?
- Is the service independent in its advice – does it give impartial guidance on both further and higher education, as well as other education, training and employment opportunities?
- Is it publicised widely?
- Is it able to contribute to the development of learning opportunities?

Source: UDACE (1986) **The challenge of change.**

These functions are clearly closely related to those of learning support; guidance and support systems are natural partners in developing access into further education.

UDACE also defined eight good practice objectives which form a useful checklist for assessing college guidance services and all guidance functions. Guidance may be delivered in a number of ways. The principal alternatives are:

1. Centralised guidance systems.
2. Filtered guidance systems.
3. Dispersed guidance systems.
4. Additional guidance systems.

Options list: Guidance

1. **Centralised guidance systems**
   May work with a central or a dispersed admissions system. The main guidance activities are handled by a specialist guidance team who see all students intending to enter the institution.

   Advantages

   - Specialised and professional help is available.
   - Likely to be up-to-date with all the institution's programmes and new developments in NVQs and GNVQs.
   - Ensures a consistent standard of guidance across the institution.
   - Can maintain specialist careers and educational guidance materials and specialised computer guidance materials.
   - The team can be trained to use a broad range of diagnostic and counselling techniques.

   Disadvantages

   - May be remote from the actual admission of students – liaison may be poor.
   - Demand for guidance is subject to seasonal fluctuations – staff may be overwhelmed at times of peak demand.
   - May be remote from teaching staff.
   - May deprive teaching staff of a proper role in the guidance and selection of students.

2. **Filtered guidance systems**
   All applications are filtered by a guidance team who pass straightforward applications to tutors and provide more intensive support to others. A very common model.

   Advantages

   - Specialised and professional help is available.
   - Likely to be up-to-date with all the institution's programmes and new developments in NVQs and GNVQs.
   - Guidance staff have good knowledge of specialist areas.
   - Staff can be used efficiently over a range of functions – teaching, guidance, etc.
   - Can promote training for guidance skills amongst teaching staff.

Disadvantages

- Quality of guidance may be variable.
- Guidance may be narrow or partial.

3. **Dispersed guidance systems**
Guidance is given within a department. In theory it may work with either a central or a dispersed admissions system; it is commonly linked to dispersed admissions responsibilities. Dispersed systems are more likely the larger an institution becomes.

Advantages

- Guidance staff have good knowledge of specialist areas.
- Staff can be used efficiently over a range of functions – teaching, guidance, etc.
- Can promote training for guidance skills amongst teaching staff.

Disadvantages

- Quality of guidance may be variable.
- Guidance may be narrow or partial.
- Tutors may lack up-to-date knowledge of all the options available and developments in national programmes.
- Lack of co-ordination may inhibit collaboration between departments.

4. **Additional guidance systems**
Some institutions with dispersed guidance and admissions systems have established additional specialist guidance provision.

Advantages

- Specialised and professional help is available.
- Can maintain specialist careers and educational guidance materials and specialised computer guidance materials.
- Staff can be trained to use a broad range of diagnostic and counselling techniques.

Disadvantages

- May be remote from the actual admission of students – liaison may be poor.
- Demand for guidance is subject to seasonal fluctuations – staff may be overwhelmed at times of peak demand.
- May be remote from teaching staff.

An ideal system for GNVQs is one which can offer not only good initial and general guidance, but also very specific help by tutors who have in-depth knowledge of an area. This may suggest a two-tier system, with initial guidance provided through a central system and further guidance available through programme tutors. System 2 in the options list above comes nearest to this ideal, with 3 plus 4 as an alternative. Systems should ideally have a repertoire of counselling and diagnostic techniques available and be capable of identifying learning support needs. However, elaborate systems of referral are likely to lose students. You may wish to find a system that is able to blend desirable characteristics from each option, according to your local circumstances. Some degree of central co-ordination of guidance and admissions will invariably be needed.

It is unfortunate that the increase of competitive pressures between institutions and the changes to the careers service and educational guidance provision have tended to diminish the impartiality of guidance available to students.

Diagnostic assessment

Diagnosis is discussed here in relation to guidance and learning support for GNVQs. A more general discussion in relation to assessment for GNVQs is available in the **Frameworks – Assessment** section. See also *induction* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

Diagnostic assessment can be carried out:

- Pre-entry – at this stage it is a useful tool for guidance and for selection of programmes.
- At induction – at this stage it is a useful tool for establishing needs, e.g. for learning support.

Diagnostic assessment will use:

- Interview and counselling techniques – particularly suitable for establishing interests, experience and claims of competence against profiles.
- Self-assessment materials – used widely for careers and educational guidance, but can also be used to establish learning support needs. Self-assessment materials may be computer-based or paper-based.
- Assignments and similar diagnostic resources – to establish effective learning skills or learning support needs.
- Diagnostic tests – available for a range of aptitudes and personality dimensions.

Diagnostic assessment may serve a number of purposes:

1. **As a first step in accrediting prior learning.**
   Normally this would be carried out through a guidance process. There are different models of APL, but all use initial guidance:

- at initial interview to assess competence claims, which may lead to accelerated assessment. This is particularly appropriate for NVQs;
- to assess starting points for portfolio preparation. There are two models of portfolio-based APEL. One records evidence of previous experience and learning in relation to stated learning outcomes or competences. The second records evidence of concurrent learning and experience. Frequently a hybrid approach is used, which has precedents in BTEC APL provision, and which lends itself readily to the GNVQ assessment pattern.

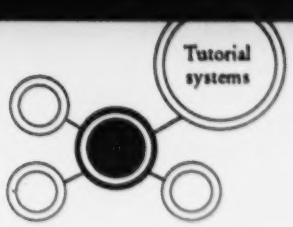
2. **To identify learning support needs.**
   This may be conducted pre-entry or at induction and would normally involve some combination of self-assessment, assignment-based or resource-based assessment, or formal testing using e.g. National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) materials to establish:
   - individual needs and requirements;
   - the aggregate level of need.
3. **As an important foundation for action planning.**
   Appropriate assessment can be linked to developed guidance and support systems, and can ensure that students:
   - achieve access to programmes that meet their interests, present realistic challenges to their abilities, and give them a good chance of achieving successful outcomes;
   - choose an appropriate mix of modules within a programme. This is particularly important in GNVQs, which allow important areas of choice to students;
   - build a platform of information for action planning.

☞ These issues are explored in greater depth in the **Frameworks – Assessment** section, and in the first publication in the *Frameworks for supporting learning* series – **Supporting learning** (The Staff College/ Learning Partners 1994).

Purposes of diagnostic assessment checklist

- Does it enable access or present barriers?
- Does it help students to choose appropriate programmes?
- Does it provide information used for APL?
- Does it lead to an agreed learning plan for students?
- Does it attempt to measure student attainment against:
  - minimum entry standard;
  - core skills levels; or
  - the key skills against the demands of courses; and
  - would different measures lead to different recruitment practices?
- Does it provide details of support needs and suggest ways in which these might most appropriately be met?
- Does it generate appropriate learning support?
- Is assessment used selectively or across the board? Would different patterns lead to different recruitment practices?

Notes



TUTORIAL SYSTEMS

The tutorial system is vital for GNVQs because it forms a natural focus for the negotiated aspects of the programme – choosing options, action planning and review – and because it enables students to take charge of their learning. Most institutions offering GNVQs will have some form of tutorial system established. GNVQs redefine the role of the tutor to be a manager of learning. Tutoring for GNVQs offers the opportunity either to build on existing practice or to develop a different model.

A recent HMI report refers to the functions of tutorial systems in FE:

> The activities included in tutorial systems vary substantially. They include:
>
> - monitoring academic progress;
> - dealing with absence and poor attendance;
> - providing the first line of personal pastoral care;
> - developing study skills;
> - diagnosing study support needs;
> - providing careers education;
> - overseeing applications to higher education;
> - maintaining a record of achievement.
>
> HMI (1993) **A level and GCSE provision in further education and sixth form colleges**.

The report also notes that not all tutorial systems are equally effective. It suggests some criteria for well-designed tutorial support. These are as follows.

1. **A clear statement of aims.**

   BTEC suggests a number of primary aims for GNVQ tutoring:

   - guidance for the development of learning plans;
   - monitoring and review of progress at regular intervals;
   - identification of learning support needs;
   - access to specialist counselling or learning support.

2. **Help and information to be available to tutors.**

   Typically this is in the form of a handbook which provides information on the content, activities and processes of the tutorial system, together

with timetables or critical path diagrams. Many systems make similar information available to students.

3. **Staff to have undertaken relevant staff development.**

   Tutoring skills are acquiring an importance equal to teaching skills, and the same arguments for developing and updating apply. Not all staff who are confident in teaching are equally confident in the tutorial role. Staff development may appropriately cover:

   - purposes, processes and activities of the system;
   - first line guidance and counselling skills;
   - first line diagnostic and learning support abilities;
   - review, action planning and negotiation.

☞ See *staff support* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

4. **The work of tutors to be co-ordinated**

   This may seem self-evident, but can be overlooked in the pressure of work. Is there a clearly defined responsibility for overseeing or co-ordinating the tutorial aspects of work? Do personal tutors meet – in that role – as a team? Are there adequate procedures for notifying problems of absence, or a sudden deterioration in standards of work, and for responding to such problems?

The HMI report also suggests that the use of part-time staff as personal tutors is only effective if they are also fully integrated members of the teaching team, and can therefore benefit from available staff development and co-ordinating systems.

Other aspects of effective tutorial systems which you may want to consider are:

Regular meetings
Are meetings planned with sufficient regularity, and do they relate to the overall cycle of monitoring and assessment, action planning and option choice. Do they occur sufficiently frequently for tutors and students to become sufficiently relaxed to allow negotiations and the development of an independent responsibility for learning to be taken by the student.

Developing action plans
Are these really negotiated, or are they tutor-dependent? For some students, considerable skill in non-directive counselling may be necessary to encourage them to take responsibility for their own choices.

Liaison with learning support
If a support system exists, is there appropriate liaison? If there is no separate support system, then provision may be a tutorial responsibility.

Figure 9: A model of the tutorial process		
Phase	**Review activity**	**Support activity**
Entry	Initial review and induction	Identification of support needs Guidance
On-programme	Action planning	Monitoring absence and attendance
	Formative review	Personal and pastoral support and guidance
	Recording	Development of learning skills
		Guidance for careers and HE entry
Exit	Summative recording of achievement	
Support activity may be delivered directly or in liaison with learner services specialist staff. Tutorial review activity and action planning are the subject of the next publication in the *Frameworks for managing learning* series – **Tutoring for achievement.**		

Tutorial provision for GNVQs

The functions of student review

Review is the central process of the tutorial system (see **Figure 9** for a model of the tutorial process). Its principle functions include:

- information on progress in assignments and assessments;
- contribution to group work;
- identification of learning styles and learning needs;
- attendance, motivation and attitude;
- negotiated target setting;
- review of action plan;
- tracking achievement;
- items for the record of achievement.

GNVQs require students to play an active role in the review process. Review is not something done by a tutor to the student; rather, it is a circumstance where the tutor supports realistic self-appraisal by the student. It is, therefore, important that this and any other review criteria are explicit and understood by both tutor and student. Equally important is that both tutor and student keep adequate records of the process.

☞ See *managing programmes* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

The FEFC has noted that in some instances 'there is too much emphasis on planning and recording, compared with teaching and learning' (FEFC Inspectorate 1994). This is likely to arise where tutorial systems are not fully a part of learning development, and where tutors are not seen as learning managers. Divorced from the process of learning, planning and recording become mere form-filling.

Tutorial processes which are concerned with learning management contribute directly to students' learning by:

- helping students to organise their learning effectively;
- developing and accrediting core skills;
- enabling students to meet grading criteria;
- organising the presentation of portfolio evidence.

In effective systems, planning and recording are part of teaching and learning.

Tutorial checklist

- Are aims clear? Do they include:
  - developing action plans?
  - monitoring and reviewing progress?
  - recording progress?
  - identifying learning support needs and giving access to specialised support?
  - monitoring attendance and effort?
  - assisting progression?
- Are the procedures documented and are they common to all programmes?
- Are regular meetings scheduled?
- Are all aspects of the development of learning in the GNVQ programme included?
- Is information on the operation of personal tutorial support available:
  - to staff?
  - to students?
- Is relevant staff development available for personal tutors?

- Is someone responsible for co-ordinating personal tutorial support? Is this a line management responsibility?
- Do personal tutors meet as a team?
- Are there clear and workable systems for identifying:
  - problems of absence or attendance?
  - sudden deterioration of work?
  - learning support needs?
- Is there good liaison between tutorial and teaching functions?
- Are part-time staff used only on the same basis as full-time staff?

Providing tutorial support

There are differing traditions for the provision of personal tutorial support.

- Many school sixth forms and FE college A level departments provide an individual, personal tutor. In some systems this is one of the student's teachers, in others an independent tutor (i.e. someone who does not teach that student). Such systems tend to emphasise the review, monitoring and personal pastoral elements of tutorial support.
- The most frequent alternative is some form of group tutorial responsibility. Again, there are variants:
  - the tradition for BTEC provision in many colleges was for students on a course to form a tutor group and for the course leader (sometimes with assistance) to be the tutor;
  - some schools and colleges have tutor groups drawn from a mixture of programmes or occupational areas.
- Group systems, in addition to pastoral and monitoring activities, tend to be responsible for providing study skills and personal, social aspects of education.
- A few institutions make use of a review tutor – a teacher who is specialised in providing monitoring, review and action planning for a large number of students.

However tutorial support is organised, its role in GNVQs is as vital to the programme as is the teaching role. It is likely that the introduction of GNVQs will prompt some review and development of existing tutorial arrangements. The principle strategic choices are shown in the following **Options list**.

Options list: Tutorial systems

1. **Individual tutorial** – providing 1:1 or small group monitoring and review.

   Advantages

   - Allows a personal relationship to be built with the student.
   - Can be clearly focused on GNVQ aims.
   - Provides a good context for negotiation.
   - Necessary for tracking achievement.

   Disadvantage

   - May be divorced from teaching – requires clear systems for co-ordination.
   - Is very demanding of time.

2. **Group tutorial approaches** – providing course year or subject group tutorial support, generally by the teacher mainly responsible for the group.

   Advantages

   - Allows personal relationships to be built with the student.
   - Is a good vehicle for linking monitoring and review to initial level learning skills development.

   Disadvantage

   - May be less focused on the key aims of monitoring and negotiating learning and tracking achievement than systems which formally separate tutor and teacher roles.

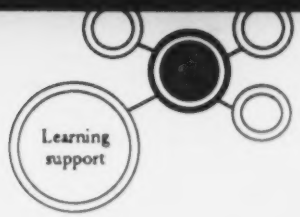
3. **Review tutor approach** – a specialist tutor who provides independent monitoring and review.

   Advantages

   - Can be clearly focused on monitoring and evaluation of progress.
   - Lends a degree of formality and impartiality to the review process.

   Disadvantage

   - Without personal knowledge of the student, can compromise action planning.



LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning support is intended to help students, irrespective of their level of study, to cope more proficiently with the demands of learning. The term 'learning support' is used to denote those activities that develop students' communications, language, numeracy and study skills abilities, whatever their level of study.

A recent HMI report defined learning support and its core function within an institution:

> Learning support structures typically deal with numeracy, communications and study skills, and with language support ... Systems generally support any student who needs to develop skills to cope with a level of study, including those sitting university entrance examinations or studying at higher level ... Those colleges with effective support systems for students are able to maintain an open recruitment policy, avoid high non-completion rates and ensure reasonable examination outcomes.
>
> HMI (1993) **A level and GCSE provision in further education and sixth form colleges.**

What are the aims of learning support?

Broad aims for learning support are to:

- enable access to education by groups of students who do not generally participate because of their previous educational experiences and lack of attainment;
- make the learning skills demands of programmes more explicit and to make learning skills development a conscious and integral part of provision;
- help individual students to cope more effectively with the language, communications, numeracy and study skills demands of programmes and study;
- improve student performance, during study and in examinations, and to improve student retention.

These aims closely support those of GNVQs, where the teaching of learning skills is part of an important element of the programme – core skills.

☞ See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

What kind of help do learners need?

Core, basic and key skills

Despite a general agreement about the range of skills learners require to succeed in the education system, the terms used to refer to them have proved elusive and evade simple definition. In these materials, terms are used consistently with the following definitions.

Basic skills: used to refer to literacy, numeracy and language skills up to foundation level. Basic skills cover most adult basic education (ABE) work and some lower level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision, for instance. Some students on GNVQs will certainly have basic skills needs.

Core skills: generally refer to a broader range of skills, and are less specific to level. Core skills are seen loosely as elements of a common, cross-curricular entitlement to education. There are a number of different definitions of core skills. The term is used in this publication to refer only to the subset of transferable cross-curricular skills which are specifically identified in the GNVQ structure. These include the mandatory elements of:

- communication;
- application of number;
- information technology;

and additional units of:

- personal skills – working with others;
- personal skills – improving learning.

☞ See *core skills* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

Key skills: offer an alternative and more useful approach to analysing learning skills needs. Key skills are relative to the level and programme of study, and are the essential learning skills and competences required for the successful completion of study at that level. Key skills will have some elements that are required by the particular demands of an area of study and others that are general to the level and programme. Any programme will require key communications, numeracy and study skills beyond the basic skills level. In

GNVQs, key learning skills are defined by some core skills elements and by the grading criteria.

Students' support needs are most commonly found in the key skills areas of communication, number, language and study skills. How key skills relate to core skills is discussed below.

Literacy and communications skills

Language is the principal means by which education is transmitted. The importance of language and literacy as a key skill for all levels and areas of study is reflected in a wide variety of need. Support needs range from basic literacy skills, through assistance with the grammar and spelling requirements of report and assignment writing, to higher levels of language use where communication and study skills intersect. These skills form part of the communications mandatory core skill in the GNVQ programme, although this is broader than the key skills required for any one occupational area.

Numeracy skills

The range of need for numeracy is equally broad. General numeracy requirements are found at basic level, and reasonable proficiency with numbers is a key skill for almost all areas of study. Some programmes may make specific demands on mathematical knowledge – e.g. statistical ability – which students may not have acquired, and individual students may not have followed the mathematical programmes assumed for their occupational studies. The use of numbers in application to a range of occupational areas is a mandatory core skill for GNVQs.

IT skills

There is a widespread need to support students' learning in the use of IT, which is seen as an increasingly essential means of communication, and is identified as a mandatory skill in GNVQs. The need to gain confidence and facility in using computers is widespread, particularly amongst adult learners. IT skills are key skills in many GNVQ vocational areas.

Language skills for speakers of other languages

Language support meets the skills needs of students eligible for ESOL or EFL (English as a foreign language) provision. It combines a number of elements of language teaching with learning skills and sometimes occupational teaching. It generally lays a somewhat greater emphasis on oral skills than related areas of literacy support. Need will vary with the ethnicity patterns of the local area and with institutional recruitment policy. The range of need may span from basic skills to advanced language demands. Fluency in spoken language is a key skill for all education. No specific provision is made within GNVQs for language support, which is therefore additional to core skills provision.

Study skills

Study skills are key skills for all areas of education, including advanced study. Students benefit when these skills are explicitly taught, though many teachers still take them for granted. Integral provision (within occupational studies) is increasingly made, either through integral teaching or discrete study skills modules. Study skills form an element of personal skills – that is, additional core skills in GNVQs – and are required by the grading criteria. The integral development of key skills would be substantially assisted if personal core skills became a customary addition for students who would benefit from improved learning skills.

Other skills needs

A range of individual support needs arises from the perceptual, mobility or learning difficulties that may disadvantage particular students. The FEFC has given considerable recognition to the needs of these students in their mechanism for funding additional support in further education, although as the funding is attached to particular named students it has proved difficult to administer in practice. The threshold for additional funding is fairly steep, and most support needs fall below it. All core skills teaching and most support provision is, therefore, funded through the funding formula for programmes.

Who gives learning support?

Not all institutions make explicit provision for learning support. In those institutions which do, there may still be a narrow focus for provision – e.g. a single study skills workshop. The purpose of this section is to emphasise that there are many types of provision in a school or college where tutors have responsibility for the development of students' learning skills. Each of these may give support to students, or is potentially part of a system of support.

Subject and course tutors

The lecturers and teachers responsible for a student's programme of study form the first line, and in some institutions are the only source of learning support. Strategies adopted for supporting students include:

- **Integral teaching:** where skills development needs are made explicit and are assessed, forming an integral part of teaching. Tutors may give additional time to assist students with less developed skills.
- **Common and core skills teaching:** where learning skills form separate units of a programme, or a learning skills profile is used by a number of programmes.
- **Workshop approaches:** workshops (informal and resource-based teaching areas, with tutorial support, allowing students to progress individually) have been established to teach examination subjects,

commonly for mathematics, IT and English. They can also offer key skills support to groups from other programmes and to individuals.

- **Tutorial support:** study skills development is an explicit function of many tutorial systems, either through organised activity or individual help.

Flexible and resource-based learning systems

Two types of provision are available:

- open and flexible learning centres, responsible for a range of distance, flexible and workshop provision;
- library and resource-based learning centres, often with a substantial IT foundation.

These systems provide overlapping resources and facilities. They may offer useful content-free software, such as word processing or presentation programmes, and commercially produced skills development materials.

Basic education

Adult basic education systems are the most mature providers of learning support, with a long history and more than 15 years of operation since the adult literacy campaign. Basic education systems are quite specific about clientèle, level of provision and approaches. There are two generally available forms of provision:

- community literacy and numeracy classes;
- open, flexible and workshop provision.

Many of the latter developments have been FE based, and with a broader remit and flexible approaches are of particular relevance to the development of support systems.

English for speakers of other languages

ESOL provision varies with the ethnic make up of an area. In some areas it is a subsidiary activity of ABE, whilst in others it is an independent and more substantial activity. Provision is made through:

- community classes;
- open, flexible and workshop activities;
- language support.

The latter two activities are generally further education based. Some FE language support systems are now well established.

Learning support systems

Whilst any of the provision types discussed above are capable of supporting the development of learning skills for some students, they will not invariably offer a specific learning support service, available to

all. Some institutions, therefore, make additional and explicit provision for learning support. This can be via:

- the formation of a specific learning support service with its own staff and facilities; or
- a network approach which develops existing provision through a learning support policy, and ensures that students have adequate access to facilities.

Learning support systems may make their provision in different ways:

- **In-class and integrated strategies:** working with subject teachers, these systems may offer extra in-class support or seek to make learning skills development an integral part of all teaching and learning.
- **Additional support strategies:** these establish specific learning skills workshops, or use other facilities such as mathematics workshops, ABE open learning or flexible learning centres to provide out-of-class support.

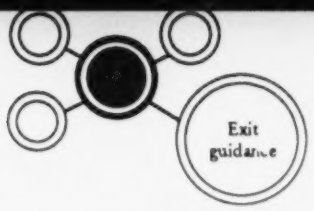
Clearly, there is a range of support needs, much of which can be addressed in part or wholly by GNVQ core skills provision. (See *core skills* in **Frameworks – Learning**). However, not all key learning skills for every level or occupational area are necessarily covered by core skills units. Particular students may also experience specific difficulties – with the use of number or report writing, for example – or they may have basic difficulties with spelling or grammar, and require additional help.

☞

FE colleges and many schools make a range of provision to meet these needs, and the tutorial system may play a central function in identifying and meeting support needs. See *tutorial systems* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

☞

There are many advantages for students in the development of explicit learning support systems which can ensure the adequate delivery of core skills and meet specific needs through additional provision. The first publication in the *Frameworks for managing learning* series – **Supporting learning** (The Staff College/Learning Partners 1994) provides a comprehensive range of development materials for institutions evolving learning support systems.



EXIT GUIDANCE

In most instances tutorial systems will be the focus of guidance in the final stages. Principle functions of guidance and support at this point include:

- review of achievement;
- recording of skills development through learning support (where appropriate);
- completion of ROA;
- provision of information and support for progression;
- liaison with the careers guidance service.

☞ See *managing programmes* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Some institutions have a co-ordinator to ensure that work-related and career aspects of programmes are adequately developed. Facilities may include:

- a careers library or resource base;
- careers officers giving guidance;
- careers education in tutorial time;
- personal skills for completing application forms, producing a curriculum vitae or preparing for interviews;
- work placement linked to vocational progression.

In GNVQs, substantial elements of work-related education and career progression may be approached through vocational projects and core skills teaching. By its nature, guidance and support for progression is not something that occurs only at the end of a programme. Just as the entry process for HE is spread over a year or more, so should the process of preparing students for other progression routes. Activities that inform or support students can be incorporated from the beginning of a programme. Some examples are:

- Drafts of letters to employers and curriculum vitae, as part of communication core skills or learning support.
- Information about main local employers within projects in vocational studies.

- Use of careers and education databases as part of IT core skills studies – e.g. ECCTIS (Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service), TAPS (Training Access Points Scheme) or Adult Directions.

It is likely that HE applications will require a separate tutorial focus. One reason for this is the length of the process, and another is that some university admissions tutors are still wary of the new qualification. Considerable amounts of liaison may be necessary with HE institutions to find out, for instance, whether 18 GNVQ Advanced units are preferred or whether 12 units and an A level are required. This information needs to inform tutorial guidance at an early stage.

Recent research by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) suggests that GNVQ students progressing into HE in the same vocational area as their GNVQ studies were more likely to be offered a place than A level students. However, GNVQ students were less likely to be offered places in very popular subject areas, including English and modern languages (**Independent** 28 Nov 1994).

Institutions have a number of ways in which they can deliver guidance for progression. Strategic choices involve:

- **Integral approaches** – progression is largely approached through GNVQ project and assignment work, with support from specialist systems such as careers guidance.
- **Tutorial approaches** – most issues pertaining to HE or vocational progression are organised and delivered as part of the tutorial system.
- **Free-standing approaches** – independent guidance arrangements and facilities may be provided generally in association with the careers service.
- **Mixed approaches** – many institutions already use all of these elements.

The most suitable approach will depend on the structure you have adopted for GNVQs and the existing provision systems in your college or school.

Exit guidance checklist

- Are systems in place to:
  - review and evaluate achievement?
  - record learning skills development?
  - complete a national record of achievement?
  - support the process of HE entry?
  - support career decisions and job finding?
- What elements of support are available:
  - personal tutor?
  - careers tutor/co-ordinator/careers service staff?
  - access to a careers resource bank?
  - integration into occupational studies?
  - specific support (e.g. writing applications)?
- Is progression addressed in:
  - vocational modules or projects?
  - core skills teaching?
  - learning support?
  - the tutorial system?
- Who is responsible for a student's progression:
  - are guidance records kept (this is now an FEFC requirement)?
  - is students' progression tracked?
  - is an assessment of the progression routes enabled by each GNVQ being made?
- Is delivery appropriate to your chosen strategy for GNVQs?

Audit sheet: Supporting learners

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topics *initial guidance, tutorial systems, learning support* and *exit guidance*.

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Initial guidance • Is there a guidance system? • Are the seven guidance activities carried out? (p133) • Does it meet the UDACE criteria of good practice? (p134) • Are there adequate mechanisms for: – initial diagnostic assessment? – APL?		
Tutorial systems • Which activities are carried out by the tutorial system: – monitoring progress? – tracking attendance?		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
– personal/pastoral care? – developing study skills? – diagnosing support needs? – providing careers guidance? – overseeing HE entry? – maintaining student records?		
• What information and support is available to students and tutors: – tutorial handbook? – a structured tutorial process? – record of guidance? – co-ordination of tutorial work?		
• Does the tutorial system provide formative review and assessment?		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Learning support • What support functions are available: – help from vocational teachers and tutorial staff? – workshops for maths, IT or communications? – basic education assistance? – ESOL support? – self-study packages in a flexible learning/ resources centre? – specialist tutorial support in workshops or flexible learning centres? – a learning support staff team or co-ordinator? • Is there close co-operation between learning support staff and vocational programme staff on core skills development?		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Exit guidance • Are careers and progression issues addressed: – in vocational teaching? – in tutorial sessions? – by careers officers? – by support for HE applications? – by other means? • Are adequate resources for careers guidance available? • Is there good co-ordination between GNVQ programme staff?		
Your issues		

Strategy sheet: Supporting learners

Use this sheet to help you clarify your options. It refers to the key issue topics *initial guidance, tutorial systems, learning support* and *exit guidance*

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Guidance provision	1. All students admitted via a specialised admissions and guidance system	
	2. All students filtered to vocational tutors via the guidance system	
	3. Students go direct to vocational tutors for help	
	4. As 3, with additional specialised guidance service available	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Tutorial provision	1. Individual tutorial system for all GNVQ students	
	2. Group tutorial for GNVQs	
	3. Specialised review tutor system	
Learning support Integral or additional strategies	1. Skills development largely integrated into vocational teaching with in-class support if required	
	2. Support largely additional through specialist staff or resource bases	
	3. Hybrid system – integral teaching with additional individual support	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Learning support		
Approach to additional provision	1. Using maths, IT or communications workshops	
	2. Resource centre with self-study packs	
	3. As 2, with tutorial support	
	4. Learning support service making specific provision	
	5. Learning support service using a range of existing facilities	
	6. Support from ABE or learning difficulties staff	

Issues	Options or priority	Analysis and evaluation
Exit guidance		
Careers guidance	1. Integrated into vocational programme	
	2. Additional careers officer support	
	3. Self-service resources and computer-based guidance	
Guidance for HE progression	1. Integrated into vocational system	
	2. Additional provision for guidance and support	

Action planning sheet: Initial guidance, tutorial systems, learning support and exit guidance

This activity sheet is designed to help you respond to the above key issue topics. Complete this sheet if you have responsibility for co-ordinating GNVQ development, or a major aspect of GNVQ provision. You may also wish to use this sheet for team activities.

What aspects of initial guidance, tutorial systems, learning support or exit guidance do you feel are most important for you to introduce or improve? (Use a separate sheet if necessary)

e.g. Is guidance for progression adequately co-ordinated through the tutorial system?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Which of these are in your direct control, and which in other people's?

Yours

If you have control of none of these issues you may have accountability without authority. You may wish to discuss delegation with your manager.

Other staff

If none of the issues is outside your control, you are either a very senior manager or you may be lacking managerial support from college systems. Do you need to discuss this with your manager?

For each issue define

Your aims or desired outcomes *Who can initiate?* • *You* • *Someone else*

1.

2.

3.

4.

For each issue identify

- the people you should consult
- cost, policy and planning implications
- what documentation and consultative information is required
- who is responsible or has the authority for implementation
- what the staff development implications are
- how implementation is to be monitored

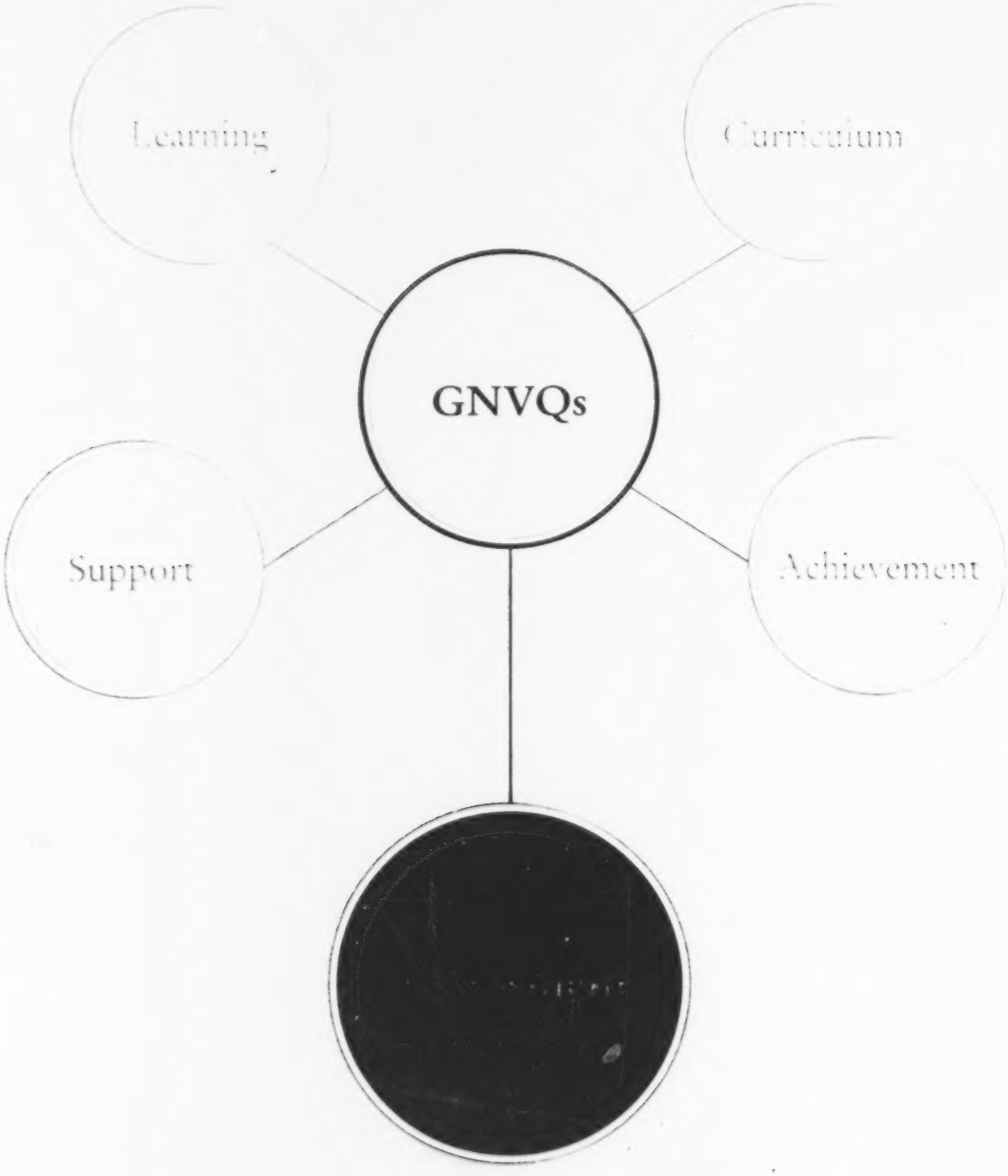
(Use a separate sheet if necessary)

What initial actions are you going to take?

Your comments and issues

Signed Date

Frameworks – Assessment



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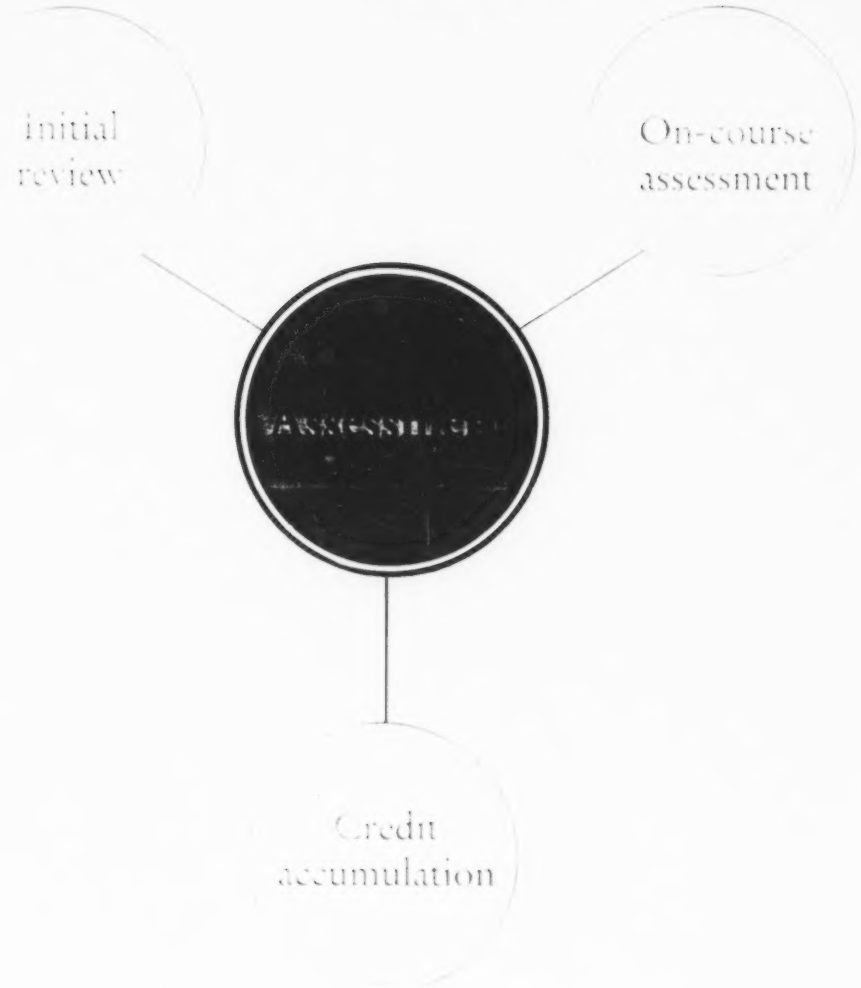

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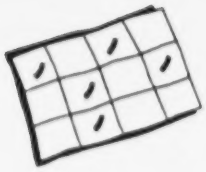

Assessment issues

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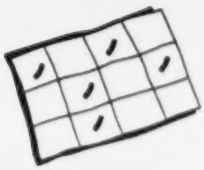


Assessment issues

Assessment is an issue that often causes some nervousness. Whilst there has been much discussion and evaluation of the content of the vocational and core units and the controversial external tests for GNVQs, many tutors are concerned about the radical changes needed in teaching styles and assessment in order to deliver the qualification effectively. They are also concerned about how they are going to manage these changes.

These concerns particularly affect tutors who have not been involved in competence-based learning prior to the introduction of GNVQs and who have not had to face the demands of the negotiation of learning and assessment.

Assessment within GNVQs has a broader base than that within NVQs. Not only is there the assessment of the skills, underpinning knowledge and range of the vocational unit specifications, but also the assessment of the core skills units, grading criteria and the externally marked tests. These aspects challenge both the experienced and inexperienced assessor.

Assessment involves four key stages:

- planning;
- collecting evidence;
- judging evidence;
- making a decision about the evidence.

This Framework section presents some of the issues and options for the development of valid assessment procedures for the delivery of GNVQs. Each institution has to face the curriculum changes that GNVQs bring about. This can be done, for instance, by providing staff development for delivering student-centred learning, and Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) assessors' training. Some of these changes will be slow in coming because of financial constraints but they must be acknowledged and planned for.

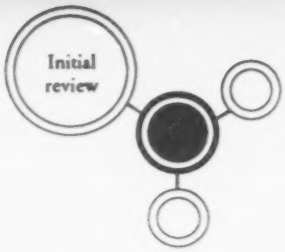
Any discussion of assessment issues would not be complete without addressing the concept of credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) and the place of GNVQ assessment outcomes within a national curriculum framework. With confusion amongst employers and HE as to the value of the new qualification compared to traditional GCSEs and A levels, a national credit accumulation framework (such as that suggested by the FEU) is becoming an attractive option. It would bridge the gap between academic and vocational qualifications and establish a common language for expressing achievement. Whether such a framework is possible given the diversity of qualifications and levels in post-16 education is a matter of current debate.

As you read through each key issue topic you will find a series of checklists and options lists and at the end of the topics there are also activity sheets as appropriate. The **Audit sheet** will allow you to evaluate where you are now in terms of delivering assessment for GNVQs; the **Strategy sheets** will help you to clarify your options for developing an assessment model; and the **Action planning sheet** will help you to develop your response to the issues.

NB: not all types of activity sheet are included with each key issue topic. The matrix below shows the activity sheets included for assessment issues.

Assessment – activity sheets included

Key issues	Audit sheet	Strategy sheet	Action planning sheet
Initial review		✓	
On-course assessment	✓		✓
Credit accumulation			



INITIAL REVIEW

The modular and 'mix and match' nature of GNVQs in terms of units and levels raises questions about initial assessment and guidance. In order to plan an appropriate learning pathway for the learner, an organised review and assessment model needs to be developed.

What sort of assessment for GNVQs a learner has undergone prior to induction will depend on the type of institution. Within schools, the learner will already have a record of achievement which will give a reasonable account of skills and knowledge to date. In colleges, the learner may have had an interview with a guidance worker as well as a course tutor in order to establish achievements. In either institution this in-depth review may form part of the induction process rather than taking place during an initial interview. Whichever method is adopted by an institution, such a review must take place before an action plan can be negotiated with the learner.

Diagnostic testing, attitude testing, self-assessment and APL are all assessment opportunities which could be offered during the initial review. APL is an entitlement for every learner and begins with self-assessment. The other options should be considered according to learner needs.

In some schools, the learner's level of competence is not determined by an initial assessment at interview or induction, but by presenting a broad range of assessment opportunities at the beginning of the programme and then, after judging the evidence, deciding which level the learner should be working towards. It would be interesting to evaluate which approach works in the best interest of the learner – only time, reflection and research will tell.

Initial review:

- provides the first stage of planning a learning pathway;
- provides a basis for setting targets;
- identifies prior achievement for mandatory, optional and core skills units;
- identifies gaps in skills and knowledge across units;
- identifies requirements for learner support;
- identifies entry to appropriate GNVQ level.

Diagnostic assessment

This type of assessment can provide a measure to judge the attainment level of the learner against the GNVQ level. Off-the-shelf tests are readily available for literacy and numeracy, though they may have limited usefulness. The purposes of diagnosis are discussed in *initial guidance* (in **Frameworks – Support**). Assessments for skills levels may easily be devised by centres, or may be incorporated with knowledge and core skills testing through an initial assignment which could be given to the learner to complete prior to induction. To be effective, testing should relate directly to the criteria of the qualification; blanket testing is rarely appropriate.

☞

Tutors should take care that the learner does not identify diagnostic assessment as a measure demonstrating failure rather than identifying skills and knowledge and tailoring learning to individual needs. Tutors should also recognise that diagnostic testing often only gives crude information when used as the sole means of review/assessment.

Assessing attitudes

Attitudes, no less than aptitudes, can facilitate a student's learning. Interest, motivation, learning styles, confidence and responsibility can all assist a student's performance. The assessment of attitude may be carried out by objective testing, though an experienced tutor will be able to determine attitude through careful questioning and listening skills. A key area for concern is the relative weighting which is given to attitude and attainment when evaluating outcomes of an initial review or assessment.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment should be encouraged and supported at all stages, including the initial review. It should form the basis of continuing self-evaluation, which will support both learner and tutor in identifying progression on the learning pathway, learning needs and assessment opportunities. Self-assessment should never be seen as a discrete procedure, but should be used alongside other assessment processes, supported by tutorial guidance.

Accrediting prior learning

Within the initial review and diagnosis, the accreditation of prior experiential learning should be included as an integral part of the process. Learners' prior achievements should be acknowledged and recorded and they should be supported in bringing forward the evidence for their portfolios to validate their claim for accreditation. Who carries out this support is a decision for school or college management; a deciding factor must be not only knowledge of the qualification but also skills in counselling and guidance.

Although particularly relevant to core skills, APL is also relevant when looking at the vocational knowledge and skills requirements of the mandatory and optional units. Whilst taking into account the learner's needs, the cost-effectiveness of any programme must also be looked at. Assessing a portfolio of prior evidence can be time-consuming and sometimes prior evidence may be difficult for the learner to acquire. In such cases the possibility of skills testing or testing through assignments may be the most suitable option for both learner and tutor/assessor.

Options list: Initial review/assessment

1. Diagnostic testing

   Advantages

   - Provides information to measure candidate's level of attainment.
   - Provides information to evaluate student's learning and support needs.
   - Provides information on group needs.
   - Provides information to assist planning a learning pathway.

   Disadvantages

   - Can be threatening to learners.
   - Often gives crude information.
   - Does not suggest which learning support strategies are appropriate.
   - Learners can feel a failure.

2. Attitude assessment

   Advantages

   - Provides information on the motivation of the learner.
   - Provides information on barriers to learning.
   - Provides information to determine learning strategies.
   - Provides information on the confidence level of the learner.

   Disadvantages

   - Training needed for inexperienced staff.
   - Time needed to carry out testing.

3. Self-assessment

Advantages

- Non-threatening to learners.
- Encourages self-evaluation of skills and knowledge.
- Can build confidence.

Disadvantages

- Learners need to recognise and understand the requirements of the qualification in order to assess themselves.
- Learners' self-assessment cannot be used in isolation for initial review and assessment, but needs to be supported by other types of review/assessment.
- Learners may need to be taught how to do it.

4. Accreditation of prior learning

Advantages

- Encourages learner self-evaluation.
- Provides a useful skills and knowledge audit.
- Identifies validity of prior experience in relation to qualification.
- Determines level of learner's prior experience.
- Identifies currency of learner's prior experience.
- Allows a learner to progress from the appropriate point in a learning programme.

Disadvantages

- Evidence collection can be time consuming.
- Training may be needed for skills adviser.
- Not cost-effective if learner requires a lot of support in portfolio building opportunities.
- May accrue additional costs for the institution or the learner.

Most institutions will use more than one approach. Self-assessment will invariably be used as a subsequent part of the learning process.

The induction

The outcome of any induction should be an agreed action plan or pathway for learning. The effectiveness of the learning programme for the course is dependent not only on pre-course planning but also on an effective induction programme. The initial review may form part of the induction programme or may take place during the initial interview.

Induction checklist

By the end of an induction programme the learner should have:

- A copy of the standards so that she/he will be able to see the evidence requirements, where success has been achieved and where further evidence is required.
- Information on types of assessment (for example, assignments, case studies, observation of practice, questioning, individual tests, external tests).
- Information on the assessment process and negotiated assessment.
- Experience of doing an assignment which counts towards final assessment.
- An agreed learning pathway (learning agreement) signed by both learner and tutor, which identifies:
  - GNVQ programme (title and level);
  - mandatory vocational units;
  - mandatory core skill units;
  - optional vocational units;
  - additional units (GNVQ or non-GNVQ);
  - areas where pathways may be combined;
  - learning support needs;
  - action needed to follow learning pathway.
- Information on grievance and assessment appeals procedures.

☞ See also *induction* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

Options list: Strategies for initial review

1. **Initial interview**

   Advantages

   - Information is produced at an early stage.
   - Learning support can be built in from the beginning of the programme.
   - The induction programme can concentrate on action planning/ learning pathways.
   - Qualification and level can be matched with learner's needs, aptitude and experience and learner given guidance if there is a mismatch.

   Disadvantages

   - Pre-induction, initial interview selection may filter students out too early, and can act as a barrier to access.
   - Initial interview assessment is removed from learning and can be threatening to the learner who may feel that they have failed if they do not 'pass' the tests.

2. **Induction**

   Advantages

   - Sufficiently early to be of use.
   - Can be seen as a learning opportunity which emphasises what a learner can do.
   - Reviewing in a group is less threatening than reviewing one-to-one.
   - More time generally available than on initial interview.
   - Review clearly linked to learning pathway and therefore has a positive outcome.

   Disadvantages

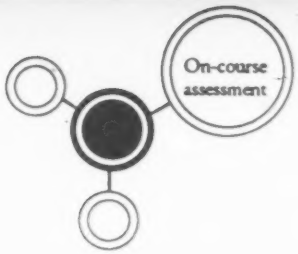
   - Staff need the skills to carry out the initial review.
   - Extra staff may be needed to support the process.
   - Tutors and students may be committed to continuation on the programme rather than referral to a more appropriate one.

Strategy sheet: Initial review

Use this sheet to help you clarify your options. It refers to the key issue topic *initial review.*

Issues	Options	Analysis and evaluation
Assessment/review – by whom	1. Central admissions or guidance tutors 2. Course tutors 3. Members of course team	
Formal and/or informal assessment	1. Self-assessment 2. Record of achievement 3. APL	

Issues	Options	Analysis and evaluation
	4. Attitude tests/ questioning	
	5. Standardised tests	
Criteria	1. Qualification standards	
	2. Tutor assessment	
Timing	1. Initial interview	
	2. Induction	
	3. After completion of some coursework	
Your issues		



ON-COURSE ASSESSMENT

Assessment is concerned with the judging of evidence. How evidence is collected is a key issue for assessors and should be addressed in an assessment map. An overall assessment map of the GNVQ programme to be delivered should demonstrate the regular and varied assessment opportunities for the learner. GNVQ assessment is an equal partnership between learner and assessor. This relationship can be problematic in terms of teaching styles and organisation for the institution and the individual tutor. There are occasions when formal knowledge input may be appropriate. However, for there to be equality and open access to assessment within the classroom, a student-centred approach should be adopted; the tutor is seen as a facilitator rather than in the traditional didactic role. A student-centred approach requires not only flexible teaching styles, but also adequate resources to provide the range of assessment opportunities and extra tutor/technician support as necessary.

Teaching styles checklist

Teaching styles need to:

- Be flexible – tutor/facilitator.
- Demonstrate open access to assessment opportunities.
- Demonstrate partnership with the learner in negotiating an assessment plan.
- Provide a variety of assessment opportunities for the learner, according to need.
- Provide the opportunity for constructive feedback and further learning opportunities if the learner has not met the required standard.
- Address the assessment of both group and individual work.
- Be supported with appropriate learning resources.
- Develop the learner's ownership of the process and responsibility for providing evidence for assessment.

☞ See *teaching and learning* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

The process of assessment

The assessment of GNVQs is based on a portfolio of evidence and externally set tests for the mandatory units.

The evidence in the portfolio is assessed against the qualification standards which are described in terms of units, elements, performance criteria and range. To complete a unit the learner must have demonstrated competence in all the performance criteria across the whole range.

The portfolio will contain evidence of prior achievements alongside evidence such as:

- assignments,
- case studies,
- work placements,
- surveys,
- reports,
- role plays,
- practical demonstrations,
- group work,
- diagrams or graphs,
- photographs,
- use of computer-based materials or software,
- multimedia resources,
- models/drawings/paintings,
- records of external tests.

The process of assessing these activities must be clear to the candidate.

Process of assessment checklist

- The learner should know and agree what unit and element(s) she/he is being assessed for.
- Assessment should move from short and simple tasks to longer and more complex assignments.
- If other people are involved in the assessment (other tutors, employers, peers or the learner her/himself) then this should also be agreed with the learner.
- Everything that the learner needs to demonstrate competence should be available.
- Assessment decisions and feedback should be clearly expressed and the opportunity to respond given to the learner.
- An action plan should be completed for the next stage of assessment.
- Careful records should be kept.

The inclusion of opportunities for the assessment of the mandatory core skills and the grading themes – planning, information seeking, evaluation and quality – needs to be addressed when planning the learning programme. Activities should be designed to allow learners to demonstrate their skills in these areas in a vocational context. Activities should also give opportunities to learners to develop their skills and obtain support where necessary.

In the case of planning for grading themes within activities, this could mean that tutors begin the learning programme with activities that involve discrete or single activity tasks, then gradually introduce complex activities which demand the application of inter-related tasks.

Grading

Grades of merit and distinction are awarded if consistent evidence is shown of skills in the areas set out in **Figure 10**.

Assessors are required to make grading decisions based on all the evidence within a candidate's portfolio, using the appropriate grading criteria. All the required units should be completed and a minimum of one third of the presented evidence should be of merit or distinction standard. This presupposes that the assessment opportunities have enabled the student to present sufficient evidence of the grading themes for accreditation and this must be taken into consideration when planning and designing the learning programme. Progression is a key issue; it is more likely that a candidate will demonstrate a higher order of skills in the latter part of the learning programme. Grading recommendations should be recorded for each assessment activity in order to provide an overview of grading evidence within the portfolio.

However, in practice this is proving difficult. The reports by both the FEFC Inspectorate (1994) and Wolf *et al.* (1994) for the Employment Department refer to a wide variation in practices, as a result of the volume of work. Some centres have decided to grade only selected assignments in the early part of courses. But students need feedback from the start of their programmes on the standards they are achieving in relation to the grading criteria.

A number of centres are developing guidelines on grading practice for their GNVQ programmes. There is an urgent need to share best practice in this respect. Guidelines on grading need to address the following questions:

- Do teachers and tutors understand the grading themes?
- Can learners interpret the grading themes clearly?
- Does the assessment plan show grading opportunities?
- How many opportunities for grading need to be provided?
- Are assignments written in a way that makes them suitable for grading – and how is this done?

Figure 10: Grading criteria across GNVQ levels

	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced
Planning	Drawing up plans of action Monitoring courses of action	Drawing up plans of action Monitoring courses of action	Drawing up plans of action Monitoring courses of action
Information seeking and handling	Identify information needs Identifying and using sources to obtain information	Identify information needs Identifying and using sources to obtain information	Identifying and using sources to obtain relevant information Establishing the validity of information
Evaluation	Evaluate outcomes and justify approaches None	Evaluate outcomes and justify approaches None	Evaluate outcomes and alternatives Justify approaches to tasks and activities
Quality of outcomes	Synthesis Command of language	Synthesis Command of language	Synthesis Command of language

- How can adequate coverage of all grading criteria be assured in the portfolio?
- How will learners' grading skills be developed?
- How is grading achievement recorded and tracked?
- What system exists for referral of learners who do not achieve a grade?
- How is the grading process internally verified?

Grading skills can be taught as key learning skills in a similar way to core skills, and integrated into assignments. Assignments must be carefully constructed in order to meet the unit specifications for vocational units and core skills, and to allow grading criteria to be met. This is a large subject which is covered fully in **Developing assignments for GNVQs – a guide for writers and assessors** (Searle 1994).

Standards of evidence

Standards are a tool for the assessment of evidence. The standards by which evidence is judged are contained within the performance criteria. It is the interpretation of the standards when judging evidence that can be a cause for concern.

Evidence checklist

Evidence must be:

- **Valid** – has the learner met all the performance criteria? Does the evidence demonstrate consistency, level, range and understanding of performance?
- **Authentic** – has the evidence been generated by the learner? In group work the learner has to provide valid evidence of her/his own achievement.
- **Sufficient** – is the evidence sufficient to demonstrate that the learner has met all the performance criteria?

The upholding of the standards is dependent upon:

- Quality control exercised by internal and external verifiers.
- Continuing monitoring by individual teachers using:
  - experience,
  - knowledge,
  - interpretation of criteria,
  - personal judgements.

Verifiers and assessors should constantly be checking for and addressing:

- Lack of consistency of assessment to the standards across the qualification.
- Personal standards being introduced which are not included within the standards.
- Personal bias when assessing candidates.
- Prejudgements of learners' competence and understanding.
- The assessment as competent of a learner who has not covered all the performance criteria or range statements.
- Lack of opportunity to cover all performance criteria and range statements within the designed activities of the learning programme.
- Accrediting prior learning on the basis of 'gut feeling' rather than assessing evidence to the standards.

Externally set tests

These are a requirement for claiming credit for each GNVQ vocational unit. The testing should confirm coverage of the range and understanding of the underpinning knowledge. Although preparation for the tests has to form an integral part of the programme, it is important that the programme does not become test-led. Currently, the pressures of the external tests often have that effect and this issue will need to be addressed in programme planning.

When planning the learning programme, centres should look at the qualification as a whole. Thus, within the content and delivery of the programme there must be an inter-related provision for the learner to develop and demonstrate:

- skills;
- knowledge;
- range of contexts and experience.

If a learner is following the GNVQ programme, then external tests should not dominate.

Appeals procedure

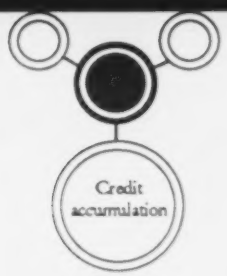
The learner has a right to question any assessment she/he is not satisfied with. The centre must have a formal appeals procedure which should be made known to the learner during the induction programme.

Audit sheet: On-course assessment

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topic *on-course assessment.*

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Pre-course planning • Assessment map • Development of tasks to generate evidence • Provision of resources		
Assessment environment • Workshop-based • Classroom-based • Support for special needs learners • Appeals procedure		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Evidence • Complex tasks • Discrete tasks • Integrated core skills • Integrated grading themes • Range of assessment opportunities • Preparation for external tests • Support in portfolio building		
Your issues		



CREDIT ACCUMULATION

Assessment outcomes for GNVQs and their currency value for accessing higher education is currently a matter of debate. GNVQ achievements may be summarised in the national record of achievement (NRA), but this is still limited in its currency. A more thoroughgoing system is required which can also allow flexible transfer between the main tracks of the national curriculum structure. Such a scheme was proposed by the FEU in their publication **A basis for credit?** (1992).

GNVQ certification and the national record of achievement

The assessment review that occurs at exit is essential, whether or not the full award has been achieved. It should comprise the following:

- summary of achievement;
- certification;
- update of national record of achievement;
- action plan.

The updating of the NRA and recording of achievement must be thorough and must include core skills and overall grading as well as mandatory, optional and additional units. The NRA could then be taken as evidence in any future national credit accumulation framework if the individual is planning to enter HE or transfer between qualifications. As the NRA states:

> 'This document enables its owner to take pride in past accomplishments and plan individual development for education and training throughout life'.

☞ See *exit guidance* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Credit accumulation and transfer

The discussion paper by the FEU, **A basis for credit?** (1992), proposed a post-16 CAT framework which embraced all post-school curricula and qualifications. The proposal has been welcomed by FE colleges, universities, local education authorities (LEAs), TECs and other national agencies involved in post-16 education.

A basis for credit? sought to propose:

- A post-16 national CAT framework.
- A common language for expressing achievement.
- The credit as the unit of currency for post-16 achievement. One credit would be equivalent to 30 hours of student input.
- A system for giving units of credit to both academic and vocational qualifications at all levels.

The advantages of such a framework could be:

- A bridge between academic and vocational qualifications.
- National standards for admissions tutors in HE and for employers.
- Flexibility of provision and accumulation for the learner.
- A system providing for life-long learning.
- A modular curriculum which would allow for co-operative ventures between schools, colleges and HE institutions.
- A base of progression to HE and transfer between qualifications.

Given the favourable response that the FEU's paper received and the endorsement of the need for a CAT system in the University of Surrey's **Higher education admissions policies in action, implications for GNVQ as a progression route in higher education** (Brown 1992), what then are the issues for GNVQs?

Accumulation

Credit accumulation is necessarily a national structure. An effective system will need to cover all the major curricular routes – NVQs, GNVQs, G(C)SEs and Open College Networks. The FEU model has begun to command a degree of support. However, no national framework has been declared. Credit accumulation is assisted if the institution has developed a modular curriculum and assessment is criterion referenced. The modular curriculum allows the learner to select a learning pathway that is both flexible and appropriate. Institutions offering GNVQs have already had to plan curriculum opportunities to embrace the additional and optional units which are part of the qualification. This has meant at the very least beginning to modularise the curriculum.

Accumulation also embraces the notion of part-time GNVQs, which are still underdeveloped in most institutions.

The key issue relating to accumulation is the need not only for initial assessment guidance, but also for ongoing guidance and assessment to support learners through their chosen learning pathways and to plan progression routes at the end of each stage of learning.

☞ See *tutorial systems* (in **Frameworks – Support**)

CAT checklist

Accumulation

Institutions need to:

- implement a modular curriculum;
- make criterion referenced assessment so that outcomes can be measured;
- provide a flexible mode of delivery, including part-time GNVQs;
- build ongoing assessment and guidance into their provision for GNVQs.

Transfer

- Credit transfer, especially within core skills areas, should ease the transfer between qualifications.
- Awarding bodies will decide the limits of credit transfer; some may prefer to offer accumulation without transfer.
- A random collection of credits would not be attractive to employers or HE; there needs to be ongoing guidance to ensure the coherence of credits.

Progression

- Progression to HE for holders of GNVQ qualifications cannot be via a CAT framework at present.
- Equal value needs to be given to vocational and academic qualifications.

Transfer

Within the CAT system, transfer between qualifications should be possible, especially within core skills areas. Credit accumulation should build bridges enabling a learner to cross over to a different qualification with relative ease. However, much will depend on NCVQ and the GNVQ awarding bodies who have the power either to encourage or limit the opportunities for transfer with other awards. An open system of transfer could mean an eclectic collection of units of credit which would have little value to the holder when seeking progression or employment opportunities. Credit transfer will, therefore, require well-defined criteria for equivalence, and in-built checks to ensure coherence.

Progression

Progression is a key issue for schools, colleges and HE as NVQs and GNVQs fight for recognition alongside traditional A levels. In **A basis for credit? – feedback and developments** (FEU 1993d) it is noted that whilst Advanced GNVQs are specifically designed to be equivalent to more than two A levels, in the original paper GNVQs were given a lower credit rating than two A levels. The feedback paper also acknowledged that in the proposed CAT framework, no account had been taken of different levels within the same qualification. This is particularly true of GNVQ core skills which may be of a different level to the vocational units. There is much work to be done before a national CAT framework offering equal opportunity to learners, whether vocational or academic, can be put into practice.

Open College Networks

Open College Networks are local accreditation bodies for provision generally aimed at adult learners. Their membership consists of a wide range of learning providers in both the public and private sectors. OCNs generally provide accreditation for programmes that are not accredited by other awarding bodies. Accreditation is based on the achievement of outcomes, with one credit being awarded for each 30 hours of notional learning. The national OCN accreditation framework is very similar to that proposed in **A basis for credit?** and, again, assessment is criterion referenced.

However, rigorous as the accreditation system of OCNs is, there is a difficulty: local accreditation tends to have local currency. Fortunately, access to progression and national acceptance of OCN accreditation is developing, since most authorised validating agencies for access to higher education courses have become Open College Networks and OCN accreditation is recognised by the FEFC. The agreement at the end of 1993 between NCVQ and the National Open College Network, plus the development of a national transfer scheme inside NOCN, will further embed OCN accreditation into the mainstream.

There is increasing interest in the use of GNVQs for adult learners, and some providers are combining GNVQ units with OCN accredited assessment to provide specifically for adult learners' needs for a broader educational programme around GNVQ vocational units.

Action planning sheet: Assessment

This activity sheet is designed to help you respond to the key issue topics *initial review*, *on-course assessment* and *credit accumulation*. Complete this sheet if you have responsibility for co-ordinating GNVQ development, or a major aspect of GNVQ provision. You may also wish to use this sheet for team activities.

What aspects of initial review, on-course assessment or credit accumulation do you feel are most important for you to introduce or improve? (Use a separate sheet if necessary)

e.g. Is an appropriate variety of assessment opportunities open to learners?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Which of these are in your direct control, and which in other people's?

Yours

If you have control of none of these issues you may have accountability without authority. You may wish to discuss delegation with your manager.

Other staff

If none of the issues is outside your control, you are either a very senior manager or you may be lacking managerial support from college systems. Do you need to discuss this with your manager?

For each issue define

Your aims or desired outcomes *Who can initiate?* • *You* • *Someone else*

1.

2.

3.

4.

For each issue identify

- the people you should consult
- cost, policy and planning implications
- what documentation and consultative information is required
- who is responsible or has the authority for implementation
- what the staff development implications are
- how implementation is to be monitored

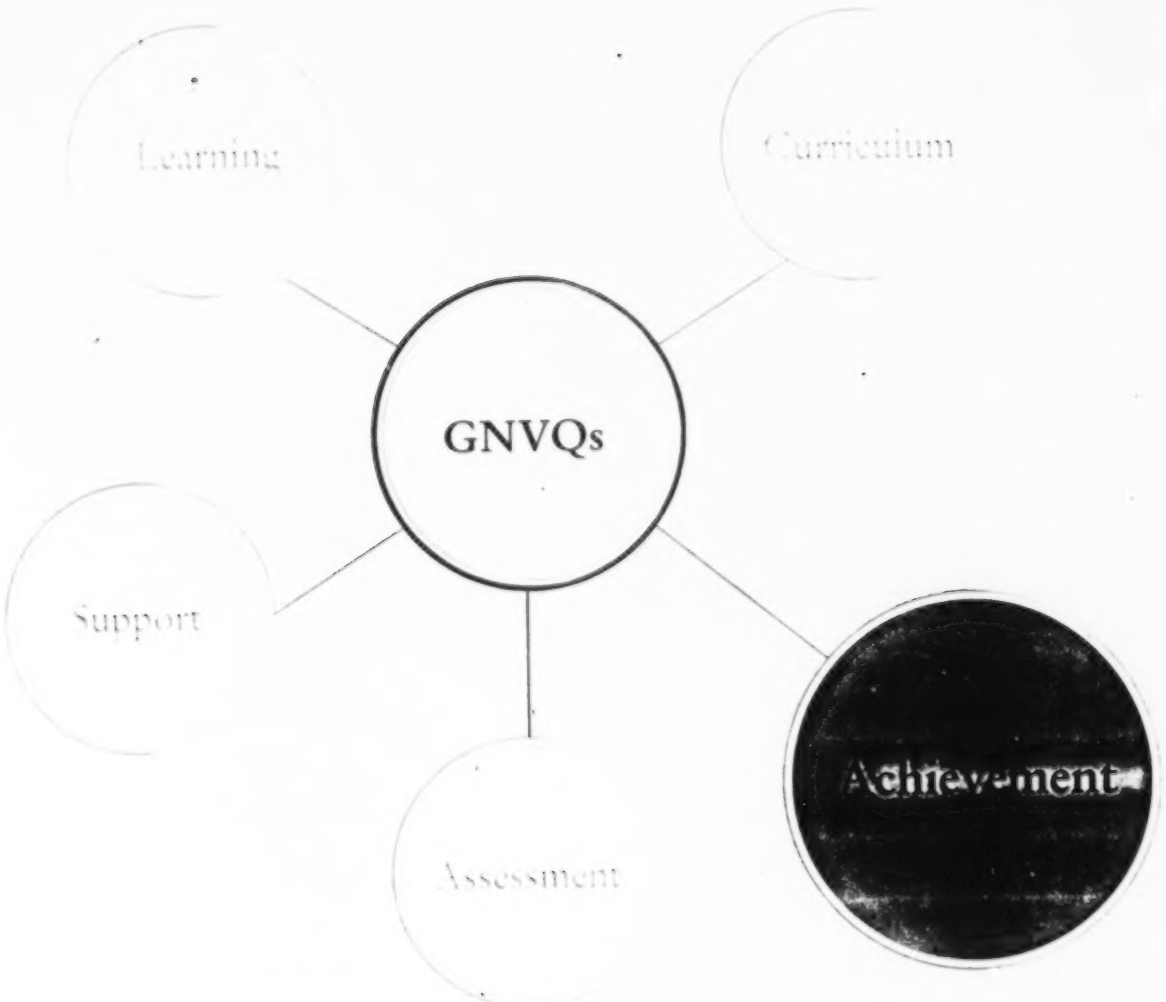
(Use a separate sheet if necessary)

What initial actions are you going to take?

Your comments and issues

Signed **Date**

Frameworks – Achievement



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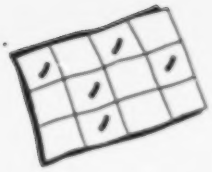

Outcome achievement issues

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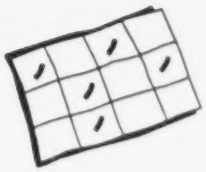


Outcome achievement issues

Student achievement is central to GNVQs and upon it will rest the outcomes that the centre itself (i.e. a whole institution approved for GNVQs) will achieve. How well outcomes are achieved will depend on the planning and management of the whole programme, and the effectiveness of the systems that are adopted.

Previous **Framework** sections have looked at:

- the organisation of the curriculum;
- the delivery and management of teaching and learning;
- the organisation of guidance and support;
- the conduct of assessment.

The co-ordination and harmonisation of these aspects of the programme depend on good systems and management, and it is through these that student achievement is enabled.

This **Framework** section looks at the issues of day-to-day management of a GNVQ programme and in particular:

- managing programmes;
- keeping records;
- supporting staff;
- quality assurance, monitoring and review.

Programme management is concerned with two broad issues:

- The management of staff teams to maintain effective student teaching systems and to achieve the outcomes of the programmes.
- The development of effective systems of student tracking and record-keeping.

Staff support is concerned with a range of needs during the development and implementation stages. These needs range from the control of workload and provision of clerical support, to the reviewing and refreshing of teaching skills and the development of any new specialist skills which may be needed (e.g. guidance skills).

Quality assurance should be integral to all development work – not an afterthought. The key aspects of quality systems which need to be taken into account for GNVQs are discussed with the requirements for monitoring and review.

As you read through each key issue topic you will find a series of checklists and options lists, and at the end of each topic there are activity sheets as appropriate. **Audit sheets** allow you to assess where you are now in your management of achievement, and the **action planning sheet** will help you to develop your response to the issues.

NB: not all types of activity sheet are included with each key issue topic. See below for a matrix of the activity sheets included for outcome achievement issues.

Outcome achievement – activity sheets included

Key issues	Audit sheet	Strategy sheet	Action planning sheet
Managing programmes	✓		
Staff support			✓
Quality review	✓		

MANAGING PROGRAMMES

The introduction of a GNVQ programme will require a fundamental change in approach to programme management at all levels. The increased flexibility and scope offered to students imposes constraints on course managers, and the radical changes in roles within teaching teams can produce tension and anxiety for members of staff.

Team management

The broad nature of most GNVQs means that curriculum managers will need to combine teaching teams from different occupational backgrounds and supply them with the training and skills needed to deliver a GNVQ programme. In schools a shift of emphasis may be required from more subject-based approaches to teaching. The curriculum manager will need to consider the following:

- A structure for managing the GNVQ programme, which may cross two or three traditional occupational areas; or for courses such as manufacturing, setting up a management team from scratch because the area has not existed before.
- The new roles and responsibilities to be taken on by the team, to include:
  - recruitment (across broader vocational areas),
  - programme design,
  - co-ordination of assessment (TDLB training requirements),
  - co-ordination of internal validation (TDLB),
  - APL requirements,
  - co-ordination of core skills teaching,
  - co-ordination with other GNVQs and allied qualifications,
  - tutorial systems and action planning,
  - student tracking,
  - profiling and target setting for students,
  - link roles to guidance and learning support structures,
  - quality assurance.
- Tension caused by changes of role, for example where two or more former course leaders need to combine in a team, or where lecturers have to develop new units outside their direct sphere of experience.

- Tension caused by perceived reduction of occupational specialism by staff.
- The need to develop assessment mechanisms which are rigorous enough to meet the GNVQ assessment guidelines, and to communicate these to all members of the team. There is less room for individual interpretation of assessment in this type of programme.
- The increased management load across all members of the team, which may require a review of any remission that may be available and how it is allocated.

One implication for team management is that there may need to be more formal designation of roles and delegation of responsibility. Team leaders should consider how such delegation is co-ordinated and the management of various aspects require formal planning – in a flow chart for example – so that everyone is clear about what has to be done, and by when. Team leaders may need to identify who needs support to develop their role, and how these needs can be met.

Whilst problems of increased stress and workload may be the first visible signs of delegated management responsibility, there are, however, some less immediately tangible benefits:

- The development of specialist roles across teams can help to ensure consistency of approach and standards. A forum for those who carry similar responsibilities, for core skills for instance, is a useful support to their role.
- The sharing of good practice across teams can be facilitated.
- The dissemination of awareness, understanding and best practice within teams may be secured.
- The development of expertise within teams – rather than in external roles – can make that expertise more available to the team.
- Liaison with support systems operating across the institution – staff development or learner support – can be improved.
- The designation of link people within delivery teams can improve co-ordination of programme aspects such as tutorial provision.

Managing students' learning programmes

To some extent both modular and integrated approaches allow students to have an individual learning programme, within the constraints of the validating bodies' guidelines. Once a student has achieved the minimum requirements for a particular GNVQ, they have flexibility over the rest of the programme. In theory they can select additional subjects from any area of the curriculum, but in practice tutors would normally guide students to vocationally relevant options which will enhance their basic GNVQ and make it more attractive to employers and HE providers.

Options could be additional units, NVQs or A levels. Some students will only wish to study the basic 12 module GNVQ and a route must be provided for them.

The prime responsibility for the management of students' learning is often vested with the tutorial system.

Student tutorial systems and action planning

If individual learning programmes are to be developed then student advice becomes central to the whole operation. A regular and comprehensive tutorial system needs to be set up to fulfil the following functions in relation to the learning programme:

- Giving students a clear idea of the options open to them – A levels, NVQs, GNVQ additional units or possibly Open College Network credits.
- Giving them a clear basis on which to make a choice by explaining vocationally relevant routes through the system and the requirements for progression to higher levels.
- Allowing for re-definition of routes as students progress through the programme, and the need to develop different skills.
- Setting clear, obtainable and agreed targets for students to achieve, and monitoring progress towards them.

☞ See *tutorial systems* (in **Frameworks – Support**).

Timetabling and co-ordination

A flexible programme will require a great deal more care in timetabling than a traditional course and must provide a lot more freedom to make changes from an early stage in the process. The following points must be considered:

- A degree of centralised timetabling will be needed to maintain control of the overall programme.
- There may be two or three separate timetables (or variants) for each year of the programme.
- Units must be timetabled to provide:
  - a coherent programme for the student;
  - flexibility for the student, and access from other vocational areas;
  - an efficient use of teaching resources;
  - an efficient use of physical resources.

A number of compromises will have to be made on these points:

- Some areas of the timetable will need to be 'fixed' early on to allow other areas of the college to timetable into these sessions. These fixed points must be maintained.

- Lecturers' timetables need to be reviewed across the whole programme to give them a fair loading and continuity of teaching.
- Careful consideration should be given to a computerised timetable system, which can give the increased flexibility needed.

☞ See *modular approaches* and *integral approaches* (in **Frameworks – Curriculum**).

Cross-curricular co-ordination

The development of GNVQ programmes will greatly increase the need for internal co-ordination and communication to ensure the smooth operation of individual programmes and the links between programmes. It may be useful to set up a cross-college or school co-ordinating group to oversee GNVQ development and consider the institution-wide implications. The group could look at:

- flexibility between programmes;
- timetabling issues (e.g. college year, block dates);
- common modules (e.g. languages);
- co-ordination of assessment;
- dissemination of information;
- sharing of good practice between teams.

Such a group could also play an important role in ensuring consistent standards and in the process of development and review of GNVQs. This is particularly important where the institution has centre status approval.

Student tracking

The move towards individual learning programmes requires an enhanced tracking system, linked to:

- the tutorial and action planning programme, which develops student routes through the system;
- the unit assessment process, so that achievement can be recorded;
- the external assessment process, so that end test results are recorded and fed back to the tutorial system.

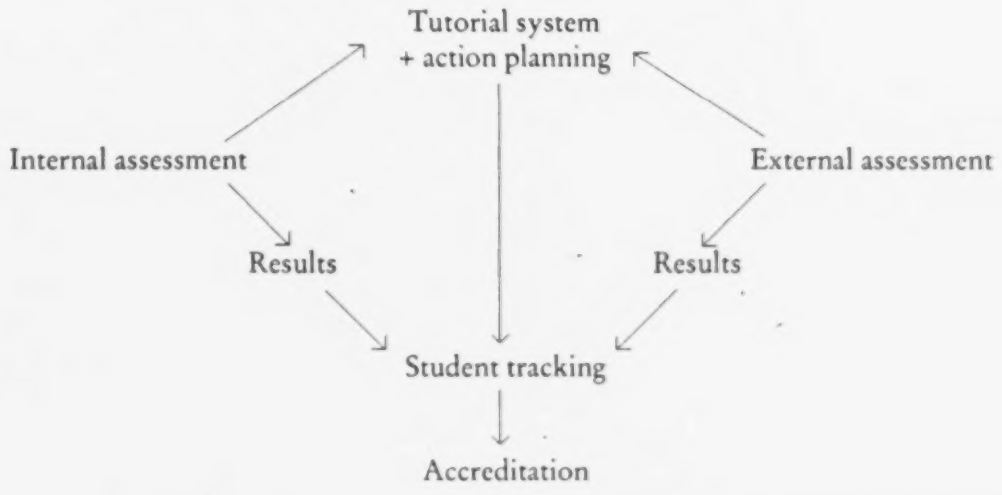
(See **Figure 11**)

It is desirable for centres to adopt a common tracking system for all provision, capable of logging student achievement across the school or college.

The tracking system must be able to handle:

- internal assessment grades for all units, including core skills;

Figure 11: Tracking system links



- external assessment grades for mandatory units;
- portfolio grades (if recorded in a developmental way);
- achievement or other qualifications – A levels, NVQs, other GNVQ units, other vocational or academic qualifications;
- students taking longer than normal to achieve qualifications (e.g. part-time students);
- resits.

BTEC, RSA and CGLI have developed recommended tracking systems for GNVQ students. However, many centres find these too bureaucratic. As long as the criteria laid out above are met, then institutions may develop their own – probably simplified – systems.

There are also computer systems which are designed to handle student tracking. You may wish to ensure that they handle both academic and administrative records (see below), that they are flexible enough to respond to any enquiry on which data exists and that they can produce customised reports. An example would be the overall performance in end tests of black male students compared to other specific groups. See *on-course assessment* (in **Frameworks – Assessment**).

There are two sorts of records generally kept:

- Academic records – students' problems, progress and outcomes.
- Administrative records – take-up, attendance and effectiveness of provision.

Keeping good academic records does not imply that administrative record-keeping is also adequate – or vice versa, though the two inform each other and both are important.

Academic records

Some of the information that might be required for individual students:

- initial diagnostic assessment,
- agreed needs/goals,
- negotiated learning programme,
- record of reviews and progress,
- assignment work completed and outcomes,
- material for accreditation/ROA,
- student outcomes – indications of achievement, value added, destination,
- external tests,
- grading criteria.

Administrative records

Administrative records detail information about students, their usage of provision, and the outcomes they achieve:

- Student take-up – records may be analysed for assurance of equal opportunity by:
  - ethnicity,
  - gender,
  - age profile,
  - area of residence (postcode).
- Student perceptions:
  - satisfaction, usefulness, adequacy of provision.
- Outcomes:
  - student retention,
  - successful completions,
  - destinations.

You may wish to give some consideration to the workload GNVQ documentation imposes on administrative staff – updating log-books, extra work for reprographics or handling the sheer volume of paperwork, for instance. Economical and simple systems, and – most importantly – the planned phasing of the work for administrative staff can help to mitigate these additional loads.

Record-keeping and student tracking checklist

Records should be kept in order to:

- monitor the development of students' learning;
- provide material for assessment, accreditation or ROA;
- assist with regular review of students' progress;
- track the outcomes of action planning for the study programme;
- monitor attendance;
- monitor outcomes;
- record take-up of support facilities where available (e.g. careers counselling or support workshops);
- assess the effectiveness of the use of resources;
- provide evidence for performance indicators and quality standards.

See *quality review* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Notes

STAFF SUPPORT

The need for staff support

GNVQs can be seen as yet another curriculum imposition, or as a positive opportunity for the development of staff skills and abilities. It is clear that in schools and many areas in colleges the speed and complexity of change has exhausted teachers and sapped their enthusiasm. It is equally true that even in some areas of further education covered by GNVQs staff have not had the opportunities for curriculum-led staff development which have been so beneficial to staff in other areas.

In developing GNVQs, attention must be paid to staff workloads and support training, which will enable teams to work more confidently and effectively. There will be a progressive requirement for staff to meet TDLB standards for many aspects of their work, starting currently with assessment.

Training requirements should be taken into account when planning development workloads. Appropriate support may be given in a number of different areas:

- building motivation and maintaining morale;
- enabling teams to undertake curriculum and quality development work;
- refreshing skills for managing teaching and learning;
- building teamwork skills;
- enabling staff to act as assessors, verifiers and APL advisers;
- developing specialist skills and roles.

Supporting curriculum teams

Building and maintaining morale

The **Context** section on 'Managing development' stressed the need for close and constructive involvement of senior managers in development and change. In order to fulfil this requirement, senior and middle managers will need to be:

- well briefed with up-to-date information;

- confident about aims and preferred directions;
- clear about required outcomes;
- able to share information with staff;
- able to listen and interpret feedback from the development team.

There is a clear advantage in designating a member of staff to ensure that the management group is adequately informed. This may well be part of the role of a GNVQ co-ordinator.

Staff motivation and morale will benefit if there is effective participation from managers who have the information and clarity of view to advise working groups effectively. However, staff will need other aspects of support available to them:

- **Information and examples.** These may come from other sections of the institution which have successfully acquired experience; briefings by external organisations; visits to or briefings from other institutions.
- **Management of workload.** Development work imposes unavoidable stress and loadings upon staff. These can be mediated by a number of measures:
  - planning the project management and spreading the workload;
  - designating clerical support and giving development appropriate priority and resources;
  - sharing work across teams where several groups are developing GNVQs.
- **Crediting and validating work.** The five minutes it takes to thank and commend a successful team is a worthwhile investment from even the most senior manager – even if the institutional ethos is that a high standard of work is always expected.

Curriculum and quality development

GNVQs present a fairly complex structure and very specific requirements for managing learning and assessment. Teams are likely to require support in some of the following areas:

- Developing curriculum content and process to meet GNVQ structural requirements.
- Developing assignments, projects and assessment activities.
- Writing course materials, identifying existing resources and producing new resources required for workshop and self-study activities.
- Developing schemes of work and teaching systems.
- Applying and maintaining systems for monitoring review and quality assurance.

These areas of support may be met in a variety of ways, but are likely to include both information giving and workshop development sessions. Sessions are likely to involve staff across the institution, although development in larger institutions may well be irregular. Groups may be at varying stages in the planning and implementation cycle, due to the phased introduction of GNVQs.

Teaching and learning

BTEC suggests that a mix of teacher-directed, workshop and self-directed learning is appropriate for GNVQs. This implies that a number of different ways of managing learning will be employed by teachers and lecturers and it may give rise to some specialist tutor roles (see below).

Students do not all learn most effectively in the same way, and most students are stimulated by a variety of approaches to learning. Teams will need to audit their skills to ensure that they can address all of the areas relating to in-class and flexible learning. Skills refreshment may be required in areas such as:

- Efficient use of techniques for transmission of information, including tutor input, paper-based, audio-visual and multimedia resources.
- Management of the way students extract, interpret and communicate information across a range of circumstances.
- Management of student activities including groupwork, projects and assignments where the development of process skills and competences is demonstrated.
- Planning and reviewing student learning through tutorial support, and enabling students' independent learning.
- Developing students' learning skills alongside their vocational skills, knowledge and understanding.

☞ A fuller discussion is given in *teaching and learning* (in **Frameworks – Learning**).

Staff support may need to be tailor-made and delivered flexibly in order to meet the needs identified.

Building teamwork skills

GNVQs may change the boundaries of teaching specialisms across areas which previously had different methods of delivery. Staff may be involved in making provision in areas newly developed. In each of these circumstances paying attention to developing team relationships through good management and staff development is worthwhile. Functional teams work faster and to higher standards than other teams. Elements you may wish to consider are:

- Setting directions and agendas.
- Identifying individual responsibilities.

- Handling personal interrelationships.
- Building morale and group cohesion.
- Developing trust and sharing.
- Handling special interests.

Training

Assessor, verifier, APL adviser training

It is a requirement of both NCVQ and the awarding bodies that everyone involved in the delivery of GNVQs should be working towards the appropriate TDLB awards. Centres should be looking to staff to achieve one or more of the following awards, depending on their role within the GNVQ programme:

TDLB units

D32, D33 — Designed for the vocational assessor, who assesses a diverse range of evidence.

D34 — Designed for the internal verifier, whose role it is to ensure the quality of assessment, as well as to co-ordinate the assessment process and the training and activities of vocational assessors. The internal verifier is also the internal link with the external verifier and the awarding body.

D36 — Designed for the APL adviser, whose role it is to support candidates in identifying and collecting evidence of prior achievement for accreditation for one or more units of the qualification.

Assessor training, together with careful induction and programme planning, forms the key to the implementation of GNVQs. Using trained assessors, the GNVQ team should be able to plan and deliver the learning programme, secure in the knowledge and skills needed to assess learners and the activities required to carry out that assessment. Above all they should understand the equality of the learning partnership and the importance of access to fair and reliable assessment.

Specialist roles

In addition to general teaching and tutorial work, teachers and lecturers may find that there are demands for more specialised skills, including:

- providing guidance or counselling;
- undertaking APEL;

- supporting the development of learning skills;
- managing flexible or resource-based learning;
- integrating core skills.

It may be that staff will wish to acquire skills in these areas generally. It might also be appropriate for staff with more specialised interests to be nominated for certificated training in these areas.

A self-assessment checklist for staff is provided below. This could be used as an exercise to help tutors and lecturers to identify their training needs.

Self-assessment checklist for staff training needs

Skill	Competent	Not yet competent	Training needs
Initial review			
Counselling			
Guidance			
Diagnostic testing			
Attitude testing			
APL advising (TDLB D36)			
Negotiating action plan/ learning pathway			
Counselling for progression			
Guidance – completion of units			
Progression – higher level GNVQ/NVQ/HE/ employment			

Skill	Competent	Not yet competent	Training needs
On-course assessment			
TDLB accredited vocational assessor (D32/33)			
Internal verifier (TDLB D34) – co-ordinating assessment, liaising with external verifier			
Delivering competence-based learning			
Student-centred approach			
Facilitating competence in vocational skills across range			
Underpinning knowledge			
Developing projects/assignments and other tasks to generate evidence, including core skills and grading themes			
Recording competence			

Planning staff support and training checklist

1. Is attention given to:
   - Effective managerial support?
   - Building and maintaining morale and motivation?
   - Planning workloads?
   - Designating clerical and administrative support?

2. Is support given for development activities, by briefing workshops and dissemination for:
   - Curriculum structure and content?
   - Developing activities and assignments?
   - Producing programme materials?
   - Developing schemes of work and teaching strategies?
   - Implementing quality monitoring and review?

3. Are key issues for staff training identified, including:
   - Refreshing teaching and learning skills?
   - Building effective teams?
   - Accredited training:
     - for specialist skills such as counselling?
     - for TDLB requirements (e.g. for assessors)?

4. Are issues which may be of concern to GNVQ centres planning their staff training identified:
   - Cost? (in-house or external training)
   - Time-scale? (Staff cannot provide evidence and be assessed for TDLB awards unless they are delivering competence-based programmes)
   - Time allowances for staff undertaking TDLB roles?
   - Identification of specialist roles, especially those of internal verifiers (who cannot verify their own assessments) and APL advisers?
   - The training of staff who are servicing the unit or department for perhaps only a short period each week?

Audit sheet: Managing achievement

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topics *managing programmes* and *staff support*

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Managing programmes		
• Systems for student tracking in place; include all areas of academic records		
• Range of administrative records to support programme team quality review		
• Systems in place for team management		
• Systems for programme co-ordination		
• Systems for liaison with support services		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
Staffing support • Managerial support exists for: – maintaining staff morale – curriculum and quality development • Adequate clerical support is available • Staff development and training: – staff following TDLB units – refreshment of teaching skills to ensure common approaches to GNVQs – development of teamwork skills – training for specialist roles: – guidance – tutorial – core skills – learning support		

QUALITY REVIEW

The key characteristics of total or strategic quality systems are:

- A recognition that quality is built in from the beginning.
- The group delivering the service is responsible for quality.
- There are defined standards for performance.
- Information on performance is available to the group and to managers.
- There are collective processes of review.
- There is a commitment to action and improvement.

Decisions about responsibility (e.g. who sets the standards, what those standards are, what information is collected and made available, and who collects this information) are likely to differ between institutions. The following offers some background considerations relevant to these strategic choices.

Quality in GNVQs

What is quality?

There is a range of answers to this question:

- Outcomes measured by the norms of examination performance.
- Successful student completions.
- Maximising value added.
- Student satisfaction.
- Achieving standards of service.
- Delivering student entitlement.

In practice, the definition of quality is likely to be established by:

External requirements, for example:

- FEFC monitoring data, and the new inspection framework for colleges;
- requirements of the examining and validating bodies, and the process of GNVQ moderation and validation;

- BS 5750 or other external quality kitemarks;
- TEC initiatives such as Investors in People.

Institutional values and mission:

- Is it a community college, open to all, offering the greatest range of opportunity practicable to the community?
- Is it a specialist institution, selective in its intake and wishing to achieve high standing in a national league table?
- Is it committed to flexibility in curriculum delivery?
- Is it committed to meeting the educational needs of particular target groups, such as unemployed people?

Organisations offering GNVQs will be encouraged to ensure that their systems for assessment meet the recommendations of the validating bodies set down in **The awarding bodies' common accord** (NCVQ 1993b). However quality is defined, that definition will be reflected in effective quality systems by appropriate performance standards and quantitative and qualitative indicators.

☞ See *staff support* (in **Frameworks – Achievement**).

Quality is integral

When developing GNVQs, issues of how quality of provision is achieved and demonstrated are as much a part of the overall strategy as issues of what is taught and how. Quality can be ensured from the beginning of all development work if adequate attention is paid to defining standards and implementing quality control.

Issues for consideration by staff responsible for development are included in the following checklist.

Integrating quality review into GNVQ development – checklist

- Are institutional requirements for quality review documented and available?
- Are institutional requirements met in GNVQ development, including:
  - Do the objectives of provision integrate with and contribute to the overall objectives of the institution?
  - Is institutional curriculum policy implemented in GNVQ development?
  - Are there good communication links with other parts of the institution, management and students?
  - Have institutional performance measures been established (standards and indicators) and are they being applied to GNVQs?
  - Are equality of access and progression ensured?
- Are GNVQ quality systems clear and are they well documented?
- Is there clear responsibility and accountability for GNVQ review?
- What indicators are being established to measure success against and to identify areas for further development?
- How is the institution meeting the requirements of the validating bodies to establish a framework for ensuring quality in GNVQ assessment?
- What is the link between the assessment process and the course review process?
- How will internal sampling of work, student records and internal reviews be used in quality assurance? How will evidence be collected?
- How will a clear relationship between learning opportunities, units and elements of competence be ensured? How will evidence be collected?
- What role will student feedback and student perceptions of satisfaction play in review?
- Do management information systems (MIS) produce relevant information for the assessment of performance?
  - Is it circulated and available to those who need to know?
  - Is it available for review and moderation processes?

Who is responsible for quality?

Quality is the concern of everyone involved in delivering GNVQs. Without everyone's active involvement, quality cannot be assured. This may entail the following:

- The staff who provide the programme are responsible for and feel ownership of the standards to which it is provided.
- Staff are organised into teams which can exercise collective responsibility.
- Staff teams develop specific performance indicators by which they can gauge the success of GNVQ provision.
- Within the established framework of the institution and its aims, teams are responsible for establishing priorities and undertaking action planning.
- Teams meet regularly to plan, monitor implementation and review performance.
- Feedback is sought and obtained from students and staff.

Performance standards

Performance standards state the level of quality to which a service will be delivered. They are a useful way of ensuring good procedures in teaching and administration. Some standards will be institution-wide, but many are more appropriately defined at service level, relative to institutional goals. Standards can be quantified, but are more usually qualitative. They are the basis on which performance measures can be established and performance indicators constructed. Effective standards:

- relate to institutional aims and objectives;
- are realistic and achievable;
- take account of resource implications;
- are renewed regularly;
- are made available to users;
- relate to performance indicators for monitoring purposes;
- are supported by an evidence base to provide information which enables monitoring (e.g. in a course portfolio);
- result in action plans for further improvement and development.

Collective review

Effective teams which have established standards of performance, have collected relevant information, and are actively responsible for planning and implementation, are able to undertake review processes easily and in

a straightforward way. Most effective development teams are well placed to undertake review, but in fact quality monitoring is often a stumbling block.

At the team level certain attributes facilitate effectiveness:

- trust and frankness;
- constructive self-criticism;
- willingness to listen to other people's views and constructive criticism;
- a desire to be more effective;
- a willingness to take action.

Whilst these team attributes are essential, they need to be linked to an institutional context wherein:

- There is a strategy for quality and a commitment from senior management.
- Effective quality management is expected at all levels.
- Quality control is not imposed from the top.
- The review outcomes are responded to and, if necessary, acted upon by managers.
- The elements of review contribute to institutional review.
- There is a timescale for review.

A commitment to action

The effective quality system is able to take action on the basis of review. Review is, therefore, an important adjunct to delivery because it can underpin and support curriculum planning. The system of review will reflect the general approach of the institution. Evaluation is best conducted systematically through formal and recognised procedures. In good practice:

- all responsible tutors participate in review;
- there is regular internal audit of provision and systems;
- there is feedback to tutors and learners.

The commitment to action is more easily achieved if:

- there is clear policy and effective planning;
- the institution establishes priorities and defines targets;
- management responsibility and responsibility for monitoring are interlinked;

- senior managers support their staff in the evaluation and use of monitoring information in order to improve planning and service delivery.

Well-devised quality review systems are central to GNVQs because they ensure that the intentions of the programme are delivered. They ensure that all aspects of the scheme, from initial guidance through teaching and tutorial support to the recording of achievement, are conducted in ways that give effect to the aspirations of the programme and of the institution. They are a central element in the processes ensuring that we deliver to students what they are promised. Furthermore, quality systems are a tool for review on the performance of the various parts of the programme and reflection on where improvement can be achieved.

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Audit sheet: Quality review

Use this sheet to review your current practice. It refers to the key issue topic *quality review*.

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
• Written systems are in place for managing GNVQs		
• Systems are linked with institutional quality process		
• Centre complies with recording requirements of the awarding body		
• There are procedures for liaising with associate sites or institutions		
• There is a clear system of collective review at delivery team and management level		
• Physical resources are sufficient to ensure assessment processes meet award body standards: – equal opportunities		
– health and safety		

Issue	Current situation or provision	Development required for GNVQs
• There are written quality standards or performance indicators for GNVQs: – outcomes/progression – teaching/learning – assessment processes – information/guidance – tutorial/learning support		
• There is a clear system and standards for appeals		
• There is a clear system for recording assessment, open to students		
• There is a regular audit to ensure assessors and internal verifiers work to appropriate standards		
• There are clear policies for access and equal opportunity for candidates		
• The process of collective review is appropriately supported by MIS data		
• There is a feedback system for student satisfaction linked to review		

Action planning sheet: Outcome achievement

This activity sheet is designed to help you respond to the key issue topics *managing programmes, staff support* and *quality review*. Cõmplete this sheet if you have responsibility for co-ordinating GNVQ development, or a major aspect of GNVQ provision. You may also wish to use this sheet for team activities.

What aspects of managing programmes, staff support or quality review do you feel are most important for you to introduce or improve? (Use a separate sheet if necessary)

e.g. Making student tracking more effective.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Which of these are in your direct control, and which in other people's?

Yours

If you have control of none of these issues you may have accountability without authority. You may wish to discuss delegation with your manager.

Other staff

If none of the issues is outside your control, you are either a very senior manager or you may be lacking managerial support from college systems. Do you need to discuss this with your manager?

For each issue define

Your aims or desired outcomes *Who can initiate?* • *You* • *Someone else*

1.

2.

3.

4.

For each issue identify

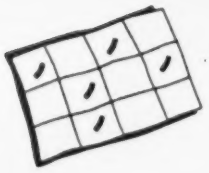
- the people you should consult
- cost, policy and planning implications
- what documentation and consultative information is required
- who is responsible or has the authority for implementation
- what the staff development implications are
- how implementation is to be monitored

(Use a separate sheet if necessary)

What initial actions are you going to take?

Your comments and issues

Signed **Date**



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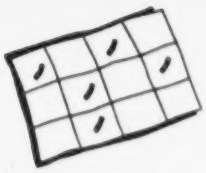

Resources

1. References and further reading

Context: GNVQs

What are GNVQs?

Department of Education and Science/Department of Employment/Welsh Office (1991) **Education and training for the 21st century. Cm 1536 Vol I. Cm 1536 Vol II.** HMSO
The key policy document leading to GNVQs.

Business and Technology Education Council (1993a) **Implementing BTEC GNVQs – a guide for centres.** BTEC
Essential guidance for BTEC centres. See also guidance from CGLI and RSA.

City and Guilds of London Institute (1993) **The GNVQ handbook.** CGLI

Royal Society of Arts (1994) **GNVQ centre guidelines.** Ref L148. RSA

Further Education Unit (1993a) **Introducing GNVQs.** FEU

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (1993a) **GNVQ information note.** NCVQ
Gives clear initial guidance.

FEFC Inspectorate (1994) **General National Vocational Qualifications in the further education sector in England. National survey report.** Coventry, FEFC

OFSTED (1994) **GNVQs in schools 1993/94 – quality and standards of General National Vocational Qualifications.** HMSO

Wolf, Alison *et al.* (1994) **GNVQ assessment review project, final report.** Research and development series, No 23. Learning Methods Branch, Employment Department
Research carried out by the University of London Institute of Education for the ED.

Curriculum policy issues for GNVQs

National Training Task Force (1992) **National targets for education and training.** NTTF
National training targets and implications.

Audit Commission/OFSTED (1993) **Unfinished business.** HMSO
A statistical overview of the effectiveness of post-16 education, with particular emphasis placed on retention and successful completion.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1993) **A level and GCSE provision in further education and sixth form colleges.** DfE

OFSTED (1994) **GNVQs in schools 1993/94 – quality and standards of General National Vocational Qualifications.** HMSO

Royal Society of Arts (1994) **NVQ units and open college networks – statement of intention.** RSA

Further Education Funding Council (1992) **Funding learning.** Coventry, FEFC
Consultative document on funding in the FE sector.

Further Education Funding Council (1993) **Assessing achievement.** Circular 93/28. Coventry, FEFC
Consultative document on quality assurance and inspection.

Further Education Unit (1992) **A basis for credit? Developing a post-16 credit accumulation and transfer framework: a paper for discussion.** FEU
Discusses the need for and possibilities of a credit accumulation system.

FEU (1993b) **Learner support services in further education: a commentary on current developments.** FEU
A review of current practice in learner services, which stresses the inter-linkages between guidance, assessment, tutorial support, and learning skills support.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit **Challenges and choices: basic skills provision after the Act** (1993) and **Basic skills in further education colleges** (1992) ALBSU
Publications which outline ALBSU's response to basic skills development in further education and training.

Smithers, Alan (1993) **All our futures – Britain's education revolution.** Channel 4 Dispatches report and accompanying book. Channel 4 publishers
A sustained critique of competence-based assessment with reference to GNVQs

Wolf, Alison (1993) **Assessment issues and problems in a criterion-based system.** Occasional Paper No 2. FEU
A more measured approach than Alan Smithers to the limitations of criterion-based assessment.

Searle, Ellie Johnson (1994) **Developing assignments for GNVQ – a guide for writers and assessors.** Winchcombe, Glos., Learning Partners
An excellent, step-by-step approach to developing assignments which give students the maximum opportunity to achieve, whilst ensuring that GNVQ standards are applied. Many examples from a wide range of GNVQs.

Business and Technology Education Council (1993b) **Staying the course.** BTEC
Analyses and discusses the factors that promote retention on BTEC courses, which have good retention rates.

The development process

The Staff College/Learning Partners (1994) **Supporting learning.** Frameworks for managing learning series. Blagdon, The Staff College/ Learning Partners
Discussion of development methodology in the context section.

Frameworks – Curriculum

Business and Technology Education Council (1993a) **Implementing BTEC GNVQs – a guide for centres.** BTEC

Tate, Tony (1993) Establishing a common language: modules and units. **The CATalyst.** No 1 July
The newsletter of the FEU credit accumulation and transfer network.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (to be published 1995) **Criteria and guide for GNVQs.** NCVQ

City and Guilds of London Institute (1993) **The GNVQ handbook.** CGLI

Royal Society of Arts (1994) **GNVQ centre guidelines.** Ref L148. RSA

Business and Technology Education Council (1993b) **Staying the course.** BTEC

Frameworks – Learning

Business and Technology Education Council (1993a) **Implementing BTEC GNVQs – a guide for centres.** BTEC

City and Guilds of London Institute (1993) **The GNVQ handbook.** CGLI

Royal Society of Arts (1994) **GNVQ centre guidelines.** Ref L148. RSA

Searle, Ellie Johnson (1994) **Developing assignments for GNVQ – a guide for writers and assessors.** Winchcombe, Glos, Learning Partners

FEFC Inspectorate (1994) **General National Vocational Qualifications in the further education sector in England. National survey report.** Coventry, FEFC

OFSTED (1994) **GNVQs in schools 1993/94 – quality and standards of General National Vocational Qualifications.** HMSO

Wolf, Alison *et al.* (1994) **GNVQ assessment review project, final report.** Research and development series, No 23. Learning Methods Branch, Employment Department

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (1994) **Assessing core skills in GNVQs.** NCVQ

Business and Technology Education Council (1993c) **BTEC GNVQ core skills units levels 1–5.** BTEC

City and Guilds of London Institute (1994) **Core skills handbook.** CGLI

Careers and Occupational Information Centre (1992) **Crossmaps.** COIC
Analyses the differing concepts of core curriculum and provides tools for explaining the core skills requirements of courses. COIC reviewed curriculum documents from the FEU, National Curriculum Council (NCC), BTEC and the Employment Department. The curriculum core outlined is cumulatively very broad, and the classifications are far from coextensive.

Further Education Unit (1993c) **Principles for the development of core skills across the curriculum.** FEU
An action pack for the development of a core skills strategy.

Frameworks – Support

FEFC Inspectorate (1994) **General National Vocational Qualifications in the further education sector in England. National survey report.** Coventry, FEFC

The Staff College/Learning Partners (1994) **Supporting learning.** Frameworks for managing learning series. Blagdon, The Staff College/ Learning Partners
A development pack presenting issues and strategies for the provision, organisation and evaluation of learning support.

UDACE (1986) **The challenge of change: developing educational guidance for adults.** Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
The seminal work in a long series of incisive and useful publications from the National Guidance Initiative, which has recently come to an end.

Bailey, D *et al.*(1990) **Counselling in educational guidance.** Cambridge, National Extension College
An effective staff development course for new guidance workers and for awareness raising.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1993) **A level and GCSE provision in further education and sixth form colleges.** DfE

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (1992) **Basic skills in further education colleges.** ALBSU
Provides information for the population as a whole. There is a need in research to distinguish the basic skills approach – which operates with concepts of standards – from the definitions of key skills, which are relative to the demands of courses.

Independent (1994) 28 Nov, p8
On UCAS research into destination of first GNVQ students.

Further Education Unit (1993b) **Learner support services in further education: a commentary on current developments.** FEU
Suggests a framework for learning support.

Frameworks – Assessment

Kidd, Jennifer (UDACE) (1988) **Assessment in action.** Leicester, NIACE
An extremely useful and concise summary guide to diagnostic assessment.

Evans, Norman (1987) **Assessing experiential learning.** FEU/Longman

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (1992) **Basic skills assessment pack.** ALBSU
Standard work on basic skills assessment. ALBSU produces diagnostic assessment materials. Other practical assessment materials are produced by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

FEFC Inspectorate (1994) **General National Vocational Qualifications in the further education sector in England. National survey report.** Coventry, FEFC

Wolf, Alison *et al.* (1994) **GNVQ assessment review project, final report.** Research and development series, No 23. Learning Methods Branch, Employment Department

Searle, Ellie Johnson (1994) **Developing assignments for GNVQs – a guide for writers and assessors.** Winchcombe, Glos., Learning Partners

Further Education Unit (1992) **A basis for credit? Developing a post-16 credit accumulation and transfer framework: a paper for discussion.** FEU

Further Education Unit (1993d) **A basis for credit? Developing a post-16 credit accumulation and transfer framework: feedback and developments.** FEU

Further Education Unit (1993e) **Discussing credit.** FEU

Brown, A (1992) **Higher education admissions policies in action: implications for GNVQ as a progression route in higher education.** University of Surrey

Training and Development Lead Body (1992) **National standards for training and development.** Sheffield, Employment Department

Bailey, D *et al.* (1990) **Counselling in educational guidance.** Cambridge, National Extension College
An effective staff development course for new guidance workers and for awareness raising.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (1993b) **The awarding bodies' common accord.** NCVQ

Business and Technology Education Council, City and Guilds of London Institute and Royal Society of Arts (1993) **Code of practice on external assessment 1993–94.** BTEC

Miller, John and Sonia Inniss (1990) **Managing quality improvement in further education: a guide for middle managers;** and **Strategic quality management: a working paper.** Ware, Herts., Consultants at Work
Two titles in a very influential series of publications that give an alternative approach to the more mechanical processes entailed by BS5750 and the like.

2. Glossary

Terms

Achievement	Outcomes of GNVQs; the standards for GNVQs are statements of achievement.
Additional support	Specific learning skills workshops; other facilities such as mathematics workshops, ABE open learning; flexible learning centres to provide out-of-class support.
Additional unit(s)	Assessment unit(s) which may be taken in addition to the minimum programme, e.g. from another GNVQ, additional core skills or A level.
APEL/APL	Accreditation of prior (experiential) learning – first step in initial guidance and assessment. Gives credit for prior learning against NVQ or GNVQ assessment standards.
Aptitudes	Measured characteristics such as numerical or spatial ability or verbal reasoning. A number of widely-used aptitude tests are available commercially.
Attainment	The range of formal educational or vocational qualifications previously obtained. More narrowly, outcomes of G(C)SEs. Standards for G(C)SEs are statements of attainment.
Basic skills	Literacy, numeracy and language skills up to foundation level.
Centre	Status accorded to a provider if the institution as a whole is approved for GNVQs
Common and core provision skills	Where learning skills form separate modules of a course, or a learning profile is used by a number of courses or programmes.
Communication skills	Proficiency in oral and written communication, at a level above basic literacy skills. May be extended to include graphic, numerical or computer communication.
Competences	The wealth of skills, knowledge and aptitudes derived from work, or time spent running a home or bringing up children. These may be assessed through APL or through guidance leading to accelerated (G)NVQ assessment. More narrowly, the outcomes of NVQs. Standards are statements of competence.
Core skills	The elements of a common cross-curricular entitlement to education, irrespective of level. Core skills in GNVQs include numeracy, communications and information technology.
Core skills unit	Assessment unit for core skills – to be assessed in application to vocational assignments.
Diagnosis	Aimed at establishing existing competence and learning needs. Diagnostic assessment can be conducted using standardised tests, or specifically designed assignments.

Element	**Specifies the detailed skills, knowledge, and understanding that underpin performance.**
Guidance	A process that enables students to make informed choices, e.g. about access to education.
In-class and integrated strategies	For learning support and learning skills development. These systems may offer extra in-class support or seek to make learning skills development an integral part of all teaching and learning.
Integral approaches	In GNVQ delivery, where elements of assessment are accumulated across units by using cross-programme projects and assignments.
Integral tutoring	Where skills development needs are made explicit and are assessed, forming an integral part of teaching (as in core skills delivery). Tutors may give additional time to students with less developed skills.
Key skills	Used to identify the essential learning skills, competences and applications of knowledge required for the successful completion of study in any particular course or programme, at any specific level. In GNVQs, defined by elements of core skills and grading criteria.
Learner support	Denotes the totality of services to support students – e.g. guidance, tutorial systems, learning resources and learning support.
Learning skills	The key skills that enable learning, including communication, numeracy and study skills.
Learning support	Used to denote those activities that develop students' communications, language, numeracy and study skills abilities, whatever their level of study.
Learning support service	An organised and distinct provision for several learning support activities.
Literacy skills	Proficiency in a range of skills, including oral and written communication, reading for meaning.
Mandatory unit	Assessment unit that must be completed for the programme.
MIS data	Collected to inform managers about institutional performance and to satisfy the information needs of DfE, FEFC, etc.
Modular approaches	Provision made in distinct blocks or modules. In GNVQs, where elements of assessment are accumulated within units, as an outcome of modular provision.
Module	A piece of learning or provision for learning.
Needs assessment	Concerned with identifying and assessing individuals with learning needs. See also **diagnosis**.
Numeracy skills	Proficiency in mathematics and number.
Open college networks	Local examination bodies, often evolved from authorised validating agencies for access courses ; they accredit provision largely directed to adult learners.
Optional unit	Assessment unit that may be chosen from a number of options, to make up the number required to complete a programme.

Performance criteria	Set the acceptable level of performance required in terms of outcomes.
Pick and mix	Ugly phrase to denote unguided selection of study within flexible and modular systems. Not a satisfactory approach to the management of choice in programmes.
Quality review	The process of peer review to determine that a programme has achieved its required outcomes and delivered its quality standards.
Quality standards	Defined standards for performance, covering all aspects of student experience on a programme.
Range statements	Define the areas of knowledge and performance in which achievement should be expected.
Referral	A process by which students whose needs are identified by admissions or guidance tutors or at induction are put in touch with appropriate information, guidance or support provision.
Roll-on roll-off	Ugly phrase to denote a continuous programme with flexible start dates.
Study skills	Proficiency in organising and undertaking study, e.g. research or analytical activities. These inter-link with **communication skills**.
Tutorial support	Study skills development through tutorial systems, either through organised activity or individual help.
Unit	A piece of assessment; in GNVQs, the largest subdivision of a programme.
Workshops	Support offered to individuals and groups on a drop-in basis, or workshops to teach examination subjects, commonly for mathematics, information technology and English.

Abbreviations

ABE	Adult basic education
ALBSU	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
APEL/APL	Accreditation of prior (and experiential) learning
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CAT	Credit accumulation and transfer
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CGLI	City and Guilds of London Institute
DfE	Department for Education
DOVE	Diploma of Vocational Education
ECCTIS	Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service
ED	Employment Department
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FE	Further education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council (England)
FEFCW	Further Education Funding Council for Wales

FEU	Further Education Unit
FRR	Formative review and recording
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools and Colleges The recently superseded independent inspectorate for education
HND	Higher National Diploma
IT	Information technology
LEA	Local education authority
LEC	Local Enterprise Company (Scotland)
MIS	Management information system
NCC	National Curriculum Council
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NEC	National Extension College
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NOCN	National Open College Network
NRA	National record of achievement
NTETs	National targets for education and training
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OCN	Open College Network
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PC	Performance criteria
PSE	Personal social education
ROA	Record of achievement
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SCOTVEC	Scottish Vocational Education Council
TDLB	Training and Development Lead Body (for NVQ)
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council (England and Wales)
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (Extension)
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UDACE	Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education

3. Contributors/acknowledgements

The contributors

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John Hurley is the editor of this development pack and is the senior partner at Learning Partners. He is a consultant with special interests in curriculum management, the development of learner services and provision for adult learners.

Steve Porter is the curriculum co-ordinator at Gloscat who has supported the development of GNVQs in the college from the time of the first pilots.

Maura Walker is Project Manager at Stroud College and the centre co-ordinator for TDLB awards. She has worked on national and regional projects on assessment in competence-based learning and good practice in APL.

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Susan Leather copy edited and designed the book, and has contributed much to the clarity of the text.

Whatever deficiencies remain are my responsibility.

John Hurley

4. Training and support

The use of the materials in this pack is supported by training and consultancy, which is available from The Staff College and Learning Partners.

Training is available in the following ways:

- The Staff College will be running developers' workshops based upon these materials. These workshops will be particularly appropriate for staff concerned with the management, co-ordination and development of GNVQs.
- In-house training can be arranged in association with Learning Partners. This offers an economical method of arranging training for a team, and can be tailored for your purposes.

Consultancy is available for all stages of development and the implementation of systems. Consultancy can be arranged through The Staff College or Learning Partners.

For enquiries regarding training and support, please contact:

- Lynton Gray, The Staff College, tel: 01761 462503
- Dr John Hurley, Learning Partners, tel: 01242 620437